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THE MYTH OF SOVIET AGGRESSION

LEO FRIEDMANN and STEVEN PHILIP KRAMER

FORD AGAINST FORD: FORD LOSES
FRANK GETLEIN

TO HOLLAND, WITH LOVE
FREDERICK FRANCK

IN MEMORY OF ARCHBISHOP ROBERTS
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ARMAGEDDON, ANYONE?
THOMAS POWERS

A MATTER OF DEFINITIC
PET

ALSO: SAUL MALOFF, COLI
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NEWS & VIEWS

One-Issue Candidates

What do Ellen McCormack, the anti-abortion presidential candidate, and the 1960's activists have in common?

Instincts to compel media coverage, according to the *Columbia Journalism Review*, and thereby lead people to think about issues they otherwise would ignore.

The tactic of the '60s was the staged "news event," says *CJR*. In the '70s, it's running for President.

"Few believe that Ellen McCormack, the anti-abortion candidate, is seriously interested in becoming President," *CJR* comments. "What seems to interest McCormack is promoting her right-to-life views. As a bona fide candidate, she receives not only more publicity for her views than she might otherwise get, but federal funding as well. As of March 18, she had qualified for $169,043.90 in federal matching funds for her campaign."

(The resumption of campaign subsidies, with the May 11 reviving of the major powers of the Federal Election Committee, adds another $22,534 to the McCormack treasury.)

CJR's worry—quite legitimate—is that McCormack's candidacy may well be a harbinger of things to come: "one-issue presidential candidates running full-blown campaigns simply to promote a particular position in the community at large."

"This strikes us as an unintended, and unwelcome, consequence of federal election reform," *CJR* concludes.

At Ease

Over considerable protest, the West German government will put into effect on Oct. 1 a policy that will make it easier for young men to reject service in the armed forces.

They will simply have to make a declaration that *their conscience forbids them* to take part in armed conflict, and nobody will question them. Nor will they be examined by any tribunal. Conscientious objectors, in brief, will be accepted at their word.

As now, conscientious objectors will continue to be required to do 18 months' alternative service—for instance, in a hospital or old-folks' home, among disabled children, or with a fire brigade—as a substitute for 15 months in uniform.

The principal opposition to the measure, according to *The Economist*, comes from the Christian Democrats. They contend that the measure means no less than the abolition of the principle of of conscription for all. (They also hold that the measure is unconstitutional because it bypasses the upper house of the parliament, and that's their legal grounds for opposition. The Christian Democrats have a majority in the Bundesrat.)

There is some additional concern that the new policy will drain the armed forces of personnel, since it may prompt many in the services to rethink their consciences.

Karl Wilhelm Berkhan, parliamentary commissioner for the Bundeswehr, dismisses the idea. The Bundeswehr is such a "haven of security, safe from unemployment and the other difficulties of civilian life," that Berkhan is actually worried at the degree of contentedness in the military.

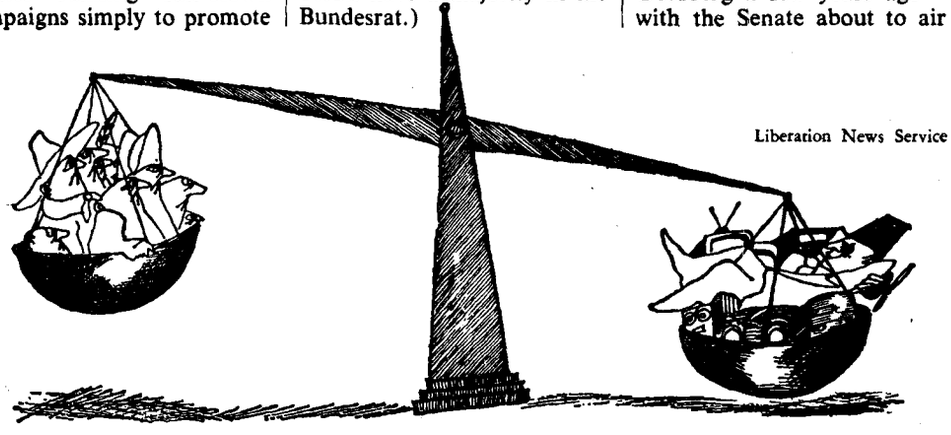
Recently he complained that German soldiers were such good boys that it was almost alarming, and that they were not opening their mouths to complain even when their complaints were justifiable.

Comments *The Economist*: "Better not tell that to the Marines."

Amen

Let the last word on the Nelson Rockefeller-Scoop Jackson brouhaha about Communists on Jackson's staff be Clarice Brown Thorp's of Amherst, Mass. She comments thus in the *New York Times*' letter section for May 12:

"I find it hard to understand how you can call Nelson Rockefeller's apology to Senator Jackson 'handsome' [editorial April 29]. Caught red-handed once again in a nasty, shoddy campaign—this time with no brother handy to shoulder the blame, as in the attack on Arthur Goldberg a few years ago—with the Senate about to air the whole odoriferous performance, he apologized. It not only wasn't handsome, it was barely decent."



Liberation News Service

Beautiful America

More Bicentennial travesties, courtesy of *The Progressive*:

Elka Toys of Brooklyn is merchandizing a red, white and blue teddy bear. It recites the Pledge of Allegiance.

Sutton Enterprises, Ltd., of Long Island City, distributors of "Doggie Duty Dydies," is considering red, white and blue dog diapers "so people will know instantly when you take your dog out . . . you are doing your patriotic duty to help clean the streets of your city."

Odds and Ends

—The *Washington Post* editorial cartoon was of a lonesome daisy growing by a Marine's tombstone. It was used to dramatize the U.S. Marine Corps decision to discontinue use of the recruiting slogan, "We never promised you a rose garden."

—The room was the same one in the London press center where Dom Basil Hume of Ampleforth a few weeks ago announced his appointment as Archbishop of Westminister. To "a goodly crowd of topflight newspapermen," Tom Clitherow, 46, self-employed linguist, devout Catholic for 24 years, evangelizing Communist for five, was announcing his candidacy for Pope. When Pope Paul dies or steps down, Clitherow said, he will instantly lobby the College of Cardinals by letter. If the mantle falls on him, his first act will be to excommunicate "sex exploiters, property speculators and builders of international companies." Problem, however; Clitherow's married.

—Finally, James Reston on Jimmy Carter, campaign '76, and the religious issue: you'd think "we were electing an archbishop."

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Sexual Ethics

Collegeville, Minn.

To the Editors: In his article, "The Vatican on Sex" [Feb. 27], Daniel C. Maguire quotes Pope Paul's address to a group of theologians in Rome in October, 1966, in which he says that the magisterium could teach and protect the faith without the help of theologians (*absque sacrae theologiae auxilio*), relying on the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Popes, too, have the right to be quoted in context. Pope Paul told the International Congress on the Theology of Vatican II:

"Without the help of theology, the magisterium could indeed safeguard and teach the faith, but it would experience great difficulty in acquiring that profound and full measure of knowledge which it needs to perform its task thoroughly, for it considers itself to be endowed not with the charism of revelation or inspiration, but only with that of the assistance of the Holy Spirit . . .

"Deprived of the labor of theology, the magisterium would lack the tools it needs to weld the Christian community into a unified concert of thought and action, as it must do for the Church to be a community which lives and thinks according to the precepts and norms of Christ."

The direction of the Pope's remarks was the contrary to what Daniel Maguire indicated and the Pope rather acknowledged the dependence of the magisterium on the work of theologians. (REV.) KILIAN MCDONNELL, OSB
President, Institute for
Ecumenical and Cultural Research

Jacksonville, Fla.

To the Editors: Having of late employed the epistolary medium to introduce your readers to his ethical category of "post-personal" [Feb. 13],

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MR. KISSINGER'S SAFARI

Africa is truly a dark continent for most Americans. Few of us would do well in specifying just which countries are included in sub-Saharan Africa, from which Secretary of State Kissinger recently returned, and the lack of knowledge—and interest—which this betrays does not help in the formulation of a rational United States policy toward that region. Yet it is essential that such a policy be arrived at, as recent events in Angola demonstrate all too well.

Secretary Kissinger has had his fair share of criticism lately, but he deserves high marks for the positions he took on his African excursion. The trip was belated, of course; while going here, there and everywhere during his years in office, Mr. Kissinger had never before set foot in that area—although, given the nature of U.S. policy toward the region, this omission might have been just as well. For whatever the pious protestations for the record, U.S. African policy in practice favored white minority rule. Most recently, Mr. Kissinger was so anxious to combat what he saw as a Soviet triumph in Angola that the U.S. even acted in tacit collaboration with the racist South African regime. It was this general stance of colonialism and white supremacy that the Secretary had to turn around for the sake of a rational U.S. policy toward the area in the future, and happily his trip did represent a large step in this direction.

In one sense, it might be thought that what Mr. Kissinger came out for in Africa would be accepted commonplaces of U.S. foreign policy. After all, what he espoused in his talks with African statesmen were principles on which this country is supposedly based: majority rule, self-determination, interracial justice, human rights. Yet it was precisely a lack of clear dedication to such principles that led to a deformed U.S. policy toward the region,

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and Mr. Kissinger's pledges of change were welcome words in African ears. In the case of Rhodesia, for example, Mr. Kissinger told African leaders that the U.S. is "wholly committed to help bring about a rapid, just and African solution" in that country. How obviously right that position is, and how ironic that words like these by his Secretary of State are said to have later cost Mr. Ford thousands of votes in the Texas and Georgia primaries. In this day and age, do Mr. Reagan's supporters really favor continued rule of an overwhelmingly black population by a minuscule number of whites? It is hard to conceive—yet this view, of course, is hardly more benighted than Mr. Reagan's position on the Panama Canal.

During the course of his African trip Mr. Kissinger spelled out clear positions on Rhodesia and other critical questions. The United States, he said, will exert its influence on South Africa to fix a timetable for self-determination in Namibia under United Nations supervision—something South Africa has been bitterly resisting—and the U.S. will work for an end to apartheid in that nation. As for Rhodesia, Mr. Kissinger cautioned the white regime in that country that it had no hope of getting U.S. support à la Angola in its efforts to suppress black aspirations; he pledged unrelenting effort until a negotiated settlement is achieved. To nations which suffer as a result of enforcing UN sanctions against Rhodesia he pledged U.S. economic aid, and he promised a strong appeal to Congress for the repeal of the Byrd amendment, which authorized importation of Rhodesian chrome in violation of the UN-voted program of sanctions.

All in all, Mr. Kissinger's statements represent a new Administration stance on Africa, and one that is welcome, if long overdue. The question is: to what extent can his views be taken seriously as representing an official turnabout? Various Senators have already expressed skepticism about Administration sincerity in this matter. We can only hope their skepticism is misplaced and that we are in fact about to see a U.S. African policy that makes sense.

WASHINGTON REPORT

FORD AGAINST FORD: FORD LOSES

(The following was written by Frank Getlein, critic-at-large of the Washington Star-News *and a previous contributor. He is temporarily taking over the "Washington Report" column for Sisyphus, who is ill.)*

So far there has been almost no class in the presidential primaries, speaking not of the campaign style of the various candidates, but rather of the form, the aesthetics of the shapes revealed in the structures of planning, contests and outcomes.

Not that the campaigners have been drenched in class, far from it. When the front runner is running frontally on the basis of his plea to the voters to trust him and on his belief in love, the bemused private elector cannot but think he is back with John P. Wintergreen only without the laughs. On the count of personal, elocutionary style, only Eugene McCarthy has regularly demonstrated first-class class and on that count, he doesn't count, we are reminded whenever we ask. McCarthy is the only candidate with any valid claim to credentials in philosophical activity—(if you think Governor Brown's Jesuitical past necessarily involves such activity, you think Kant and Hegel exist in the history of thought as "adversaries")—and, appropriately, McCarthy is actually exemplifying in his campaign one of the basic philosophical problems, the one about the tree falling in the forest: Does a political campaigner have class if no one is aware of his campaign? The answer is yes, although that makes no difference in the results.

The gestalt class of class, however, has been lamentably absent until recently. Ronald Reagan, of all people, the last man in the world one would suspect of trafficking in class of any kind, least of all gestalt class, has brought that precious quality into the primaries.

He has done this simply by winning a number of them from President Ford, one or two of them quite handsomely. The rhythm so far—that basic aesthetic component totally lacking elsewhere—has included a climax in the clean sweep in Texas and in the serious unsettling of the President in his home state of Michigan and certainly looks forward to a grand climacteric in Reagan's "home" state of California. Mere winning, however, isn't enough, or Jimmy Carter would be the classiest thing since Elsie de Wolfe. What makes the difference is winning in such a way as to create a certain satisfying shape to the victory, one, for example, of exquisite simplicity, or one of elaborate complexity in which each element falls into place at precisely the right moment.

The shape of Reagan's victories, of his achievement of the fleeting state of front-runner, from which it is so much easier to drop back to equal, head-to-head competition than it is to attain that equality from far behind, the shape of that achievement is derived from Japanese wrestling, in which, unlike our own, the object of the contender is to use the opponent's strength against him. In Reagan's case, this technique has been the easier, since Ford has voluntarily and consistently

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brought his own strength—or what he sees as his strength—to bear against himself, operating in ideology and political action much as that keen observer, Chevy Chase, portrays the president as acting in the world of physical objects and obstacles.

While all right-thinking (in either sense) citizens would like to believe that the large-scale repudiation of Ford by voters of his own party has been at least partly based on a deep-seated desire finally to be done with Watergate—Ford being not only the maintainer and enhancer of such Nixonians as have not gone to jail, but also himself, after all, the last gift of Richard Nixon to his country—the political analysis with the highest credentials has been unanimous in rejecting any such assumption. On the contrary, it seems quite clear that Reagan has toppled Ford with two issues and, to be sure, a resonance from those two issues that sounds through half a dozen others and itself constitutes if not a foreign policy exactly at least an attitude toward foreigners and foreign affairs.

The more precise of the two issues has been the Panama Canal, which Reagan holds to be as much an American land as Texas and which he has accused Ford of wishing to give away to Panama, now in the hands of a military dictator.

The Reagan Panamanian position is remarkable chiefly as being the first time in memory an American right-winger has come out against a foreign military dictator, most of whom are traditionally regarded by our right as the bastions and best friends of what is rather mysteriously called "the free world."

The more general issue, hence the harder to refute, has been the current state of the American military establishment in relation to that of the Soviet Union. Various sets of figures have been used to prove that the Russians have overtaken us in arms superiority, that, in fact, they have achieved superiority themselves, that they are about to do so any moment now, and that they have attained the possibility of so doing and that possibility will increase steadily so long as one cent of this nation's budget is spent for anything other than arms. You can take your choice of any of those degrees on the concern-through-panic scale. The meaning is the same in all cases: Ford has been dangerously lax in giving the military all it deems essential, as a result the defenses of the country are in pitiable shape, and we may expect the Russians at the Ambrose Light or the Golden Gate some time in the next few years, perhaps months, depending on the enthusiasm of the speaker and the response of the crowd.

Panama is an exotic, as they say in horticultural catalogues, but the defense "issue" of course has been around in pretty much the same shape as that enunciated by Reagan for the last thirty years. In that time there hasn't been a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs—that incredible title that sounds like a corporation of tomahawks but is actually more involved in wampum—who hasn't raised the same alarm, cried, The Russians are coming, The Russians are coming! and got the key to the Treasury for a month or so. It's old stuff. The Russians are *always* coming, and if anyone suggests Pentagonians should not go duck-hunting with their hardware merchants, still worse that naval commanders are responsible for their aircraft carriers decapitating lesser vessels, such suggestions are clearly made to give aid and comfort to the enemy, even now steaming toward Montauk at a good clip, only to be repulsed by cash and lots of it.

Old stuff, to be sure. What gives it class in this year's context is that it is Ford's old stuff, not Reagan's particularly. When Reagan was still confronting the dread problem of welfare mothers getting free food for their children, Ford was already grown middle-aged working for the Pentagon and for the general foreign-policy attitude represented by the invade-Panama-now-school. It is Ford, not Reagan, who has whooped it up for higher ever higher Defense Department budgets, Ford, not Reagan, who has cautioned that one dollar pared from the subsidy of the Joint Chiefs' lunchroom would bring the godless Communists up the Potomac, Ford, in short, not Reagan, who over the years has actually accomplished a great deal, not just talked about it, in turning the country over to the Pentagon to do with as it will.

Ford is being beat over the head with Ford, automatically an aesthetic development of a certain elegance.

The case with Kissinger is hardly less satisfying from an aesthetic point of view. He is being pilloried as soft on Communism, not hard line enough and so on. Good Heavens, there is not an anti-Communist in the country who has actually worked the line to such effect as Henry. He is one of the great slaughterers of all history, a bomber on a scale far surpassing the efforts of his fellow sanguinary scholars, Dean Rusk and Walt Whitman Rostow, and all of the swarms of people he has bombed have been Communists, or Communist-sympathizers, or Communist dupes, by definition. For this, he is to be turned out as soft on the Commies. It takes the breath away. A novelist, a playwright, a movie-maker, would hesitate to risk such a turn because of the credibility problem, yet there it is, happening daily before our eyes. That's class.

With Cardinal Wolsey, that premature Metternichian, Kissinger can well say, Had I but serv'd sweet Peace with half the zeal I serv'd red War, it would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies. Sic transit and so long, Henry.

As for poor, "decent" Jerry Ford, child of the television age who was all along labeled self-destruct, in his vanishing he reminds us that those who take the missile gap will fall into it.

FRANK GETLEIN

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A MATTER OF DEFINITIONS

PETER STEINFELS

A few definitions:

FAILURE OF NERVE. A degenerative condition reported to afflict American foreign-policy-making. Manifests itself in the suspicion, obviously unwarranted, that the personnel and premises responsible for Vietnam, Chile, attempted assassinations of foreign leaders, and various military actions engaged in without congressional consent deserve careful scrutiny. Those suffering from this condition display inordinate tendencies to think twice about endorsing U.S. military commitments. They obstinately insist on full information before making judgments, and occasionally even say no. It is doubtful whether constitutional government can long survive such a malady.

DECLINE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY. In Europe, a mysterious process coinciding with the collapse of U.S.-supported dictatorships in Portugal and Greece and the restoration of constitutional regimes, the weakening of a U.S.-supported dictatorship in Spain, and the possibility that opposition parties including the Communists might be freely elected to office in Italy and France. Ordinarily such unfortunate events would trigger extensive use of the CIA (see below) to firm up liberal democracy by intervening in European affairs; but this is now more difficult, owing to FAILURE OF NERVE (see above) and LEFT-WING PARANOIA (see below). In the Third World, there is widespread abandonment of free institutions and guaranteed liberties, much to the disappointment of American officials who have done so much to encourage constitutional and democratic regimes in these countries. (See AFRICA, below.)

EXCESS OF DEMOCRACY. The theory, put forth by some neoconservatives (see below), that a nation in which two-thirds of the adults believe that their opinion "doesn't count much anymore," in which small percentages of party members choose two candidates so that one President can be elected by a minority of eligible voters, is a nation in the grip of a "democratic surge." The "democratic surge" leads to the DECLINE OF DEMOCRACY (see above), following Hegel. Democracy cannot be too hot or too cold but just right, following Aristotle and Goldilocks.

NEOCONSERVATIVE. A liberal academic whose students were rude in the '60s; now a conservative who still believes in the progressive income tax. Or at least, in distinction to regular conservatives, thinks it does no great harm.

LEFT-WING PARANOIA. From the Greek for "pair of annoyances." Mental disturbance characteristic of some liberals and radicals. Persistent delusion that the FBI and CIA are violating U.S. law to undermine and destroy legitimate political movements here and overseas. In severe cases, those in this state of mind may suspect wholesale use of informers, *agents provocateurs*, legal frame-ups, forgeries, violence, and other preposterous devices—even against respected American leaders and democratically elected governments! Attempts to relieve this condition by agency apologies and presidential reassurances have proved curiously unavailing. Those afflicted should probably be quarantined from normal political life.

FBI. A federal regulatory commission in charge of the political opinions of American citizens.

CIA. A part of the White House staff, with tens of thousands of employees and a $10 billion budget. It has three tasks: (a) to foster democracy overseas when it conforms to American interests; (b) to undermine democracy overseas when it conflicts with American interests; (c) to define American interests.

AFRICA. A continent recently discovered by the State Department to be inhabited overwhelmingly by blacks. This information had previously been reported by liberals, who suggested it might have consequences for American foreign policy in those regions. Due to their source, however, such suggestions had to be discounted. (See FAILURE OF NERVE and LEFT-WING PARANOIA, above.)

CUBA. A Caribbean nation recently discovered by liberals to be in Africa. Sometimes rumored to be Moscow's Howard Hughes.

RECESSION. The state of the American economy, except in election years.

RELIGIOUS ISSUE. Controversy stirred by the danger that a presidential candidate may believe in something.

MOMENTUM. The objective of primary elections. The candidate who "gets momentum" is most qualified to become President of the United States. The media know this. Jimmy Carter knows this. While other candidates have been stuck on secondary issues, Carter always goes to the media with the central question: is he "picking up momentum"? is he "losing momentum"? MOMENTUM is vaguely mystical, like most elements of American presidential campaigns. It is like the "mandate of heaven" or "centering." Maybe Jerry Brown will get "momentum" next. Eugene McCarthy will not. (Is Jerry Brown the Eugene McCarthy of the future injected into the present? Or is he the Eugene McCarthy of the past injected into the future? What is the sound of one hand clapping?)

BICENTENNIAL. Capable of performing centennial acts with either men or women. The Vatican says this is wrong. The Supreme Court says it is up to the local community.

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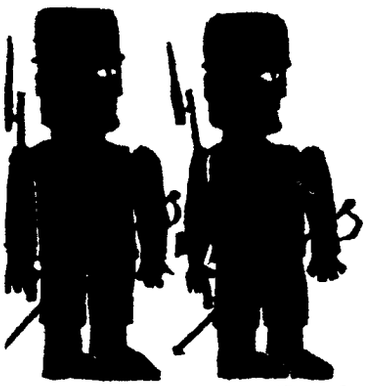
THE MYTH OF SOVIET AGGRESSION

LEO FRIEDMANN and STEVEN PHILIP KRAMER



Russian leadership remains primarily defense-minded

We are hearing more and more these days about Soviet "expansionism." At the same time as our policy-makers exalt the importance of détente, if no longer the word itself, they argue that the Soviet Union is probing our post-Vietnam, post-Watergate commitment in various places in Africa, Western Europe, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East and Korea. Together with accounts of new sophisticated weapons developments, these reports imply that the Russians are challenging American interests abroad. The logical conclusion is that we develop newer and more sophisticated weapons systems in response.

Such a conclusion is always suspect. The military industrial complex has never lacked good reasons for expanding its role and increasing its budget. But if our skepticism is to be well founded, it must be based on an analysis of Soviet weapons and Soviet policy. It cannot be denied that the Soviets are willing to exploit American weakness. It is also true that possession of nuclear weapons almost automatically calls forth a certain aggressiveness. But the way these weapons are controlled, and Russian capability to make use of them as part of any planned policy must be explored. Can Russian society be mobilized for an atomic war or planned adventure? The answer can only be found in a study of Russian foreign policy and society.

I

The extreme caution of Soviet foreign policy, and its self-destructive consequences, have become well known. The tsarist regime, despite grandiose pan-slavic ambitions, despite its historic quest for control of the straits, fulfilled none of its great aims. Where it was not cautious—in the Crimean war, in 1905, in 1914—it paid a heavy price, in the last case committing the ultimate act of suicide. Likewise, the Soviet regime, despite its calls for international revolution, accepted the humiliation of the peace of Brest Litovsk (despite vigorous opposition within the Bolshevik ranks), rather than destroy itself the way its predecessors had done.

It is by now generally known how Stalin, despite warnings from all sides, hesitated for hours before facing the reality of the German invasion in 1941. It was not out of reluctance to impose fear and terror on his people—these were the very means he had used to consolidate his power. It was out of mistrust, out of fear that the Soviet Union would collapse in the face of German arms, as a result of antagonism to his regime. That did not happen, and by 1945 Stalin had regained his "clairvoyant" image.

For Russia the disasters of the first years were overshadowed by the victories of the last. There was a power vacuum in Eastern Europe, and Russia moved in, to the surprise of no realistic observer. Churchill had feared just that, had pushed for a Balkan expedition by the Americans and English to avert it. Overruled by Roosevelt, he was quite happy to negotiate sphere-of-influence agreements with Stalin, which Stalin kept. Despite excellent conditions for the Communists, Stalin stayed out of Greece. Ironically, Stalin and his successors were never able to impose their rule over Yugoslavia and Albania.

Still, we must not be victims of historicism. That Russia's policy was conservative after World War II

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does not prove that it is conservative now; weapons have changed, the Third World has come into being. Perhaps Soviet policy has changed.

Traditional Soviet defensiveness has never precluded support for "liberation" movements. It is highly unlikely that either of the great powers will ever forgo interference in the Third World, whose economic and strategic role is increasing. The West has "rational" economic reasons for involvement—the need for scarce raw materials (as well as irrational reasons from time to time). But the Soviet Union has most of what it needs within its borders. The main reason for Soviet involvement is ideological—the need to keep alive the myth of the "liberating" function of Soviet foreign policy.

Here, to be sure, the Soviets have an advantage. So long as the Americans defend a quite indefensible status quo—be it in Portugal and Spain, Angola, Chile, or Southern Africa—Soviet policy necessarily assumes a "progressive" cast (not because the KGB is more humanistic than the CIA). But if American policy has

specialized in baroque disasters like Southeast Asia and Greece, Soviet policy, in its own quiet and cautious way, has hardly proven more successful.

Soviet determination to avoid conflict in the Middle East resulted in their being run out of Egypt after enormous investments there. Cuba did not become a springboard to Latin America, and only American inflexibility has prevented Cuban estrangement from Russia. In Portugal, where presumably Russia showed less caution, and gave the green light to Cunhal for a hard-line policy, the Communists were not only defeated but may well have contributed to the failure of the whole revolutionary experiment.

Where Communist parties have been successful in Western Europe, it has been by moving away from Moscow; one can easily imagine that the only people more upset by the prospect of Communist participation in the Italian government than Kissinger are the Russian leaders, the more so since the Italian heresy seems to be rubbing off on the traditionally Stalinist French Communist party. The Soviets have had a good hand and played it badly; they have shown little aggressiveness and experienced even less success. But why?

II

There is a contradiction between Soviet rhetoric and the real operation of Soviet policy. There is a sharp gap between the willingness to commit weapons and matériel (Cuba, the Middle East) and the willingness to accept the political confrontations that ensue. The USSR showed an extraordinary alacrity in disengaging itself during the Cuban missile crisis and from the Sinai War, hardly paralleled by American stubbornness in Vietnam. What are the reasons for such over-cautious behavior, for Soviet inability to take advantage of the Americans' handicaps?

Stalin, after World War II, aimed at one thing—to make Soviet borders more secure, to extend territorial protection as far west as possible, to place pro-Russian regimes in Central Europe. This policy was not based on fantasy—two German invasions in three decades had left their mark. But nuclear arms and air power have made such protection irrelevant. What counts today is a society's ability to mobilize its human and natural resources to meet the challenges of the nuclear age. It has become fashionable to argue that there is no defense against nuclear arms, that there is no chance of surviving a nuclear war. Neither Russian nor Chinese leadership quite believes that, yet the Soviet leadership remains primarily defense-minded. Nuclear weapons may have an inherent aggressive momentum of their own, but no one is more aware of this than the Presidium, and of the nuclear powers, none has a more stringent control of its arsenal, and of its diplomatic instrumentalities, than Russia.

Soviet skepticism about military capabilities is based on fundamental experiences in other areas. To summarize these experiences is not difficult: in agriculture, collectivization, mechanization and chemical fertilization have not resulted in brilliant successes, as demonstrated by last year's abysmal harvest. The differential between industry and agriculture has remained, although elimination of the gap has been a major goal of the regime. Even within industry, wide gaps in production and level of skills remain.

These failures have often been blamed on "planning." But planning is responsible for the emergence of an apparatus of management and engineering skills which is one of the Soviets' main achievements (it is from the ranks of engineers that both Brezhnev and Kosygin come). It is the overwhelming allocation of resources to weaponry and space technology which has disorganized the overall industrial structure, has limited scientific manpower in other areas, which has left agriculture an underdeveloped area, and the peasantry a backward social stratum.

These contradictions prevail, of course, in the U.S. as well. In both countries space and weapons have emerged as elitist sectors in the economy. In the U.S.

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much of the automation and computerization developed there has, however, found its way into other areas of production. In Russia, on the other hand, there is a real polarization, and this sector is isolated from the others. There are other differences as well. Our agriculture is long mechanized, our society has larger and better educated "white collar" or "middle class" strata. Although the gap between "mass" and "elite," between advanced and backward sectors of the economy certainly does exist here, limiting economic development, the degree to which this is the case is significantly less than in the USSR.

In other words, there has not been a sufficient upgrading of skills in Russia. There has been an oppression, rather than a proliferation of the intelligentsia. The fear of liberalization, the fear of the intelligentsia thwart the development of an advanced society. And without viable structures of a modern society, foreign policy and warfare in the nuclear age are not possible. Human initiative and stable technology grounded in a flexible social structure are the real determining factors in peace and war in the nuclear age.

III

Our problem is not to determine who will start a nuclear war. It is unlikely that any of the superpowers will ever do so. The real question is, who is capable of handling its nuclear potential in such a way that its military sector can be contained, a peaceful *modus vivendi* maintained and policies evolved leading to development in the Third World and to modernization at home.

On the Soviet side, such problems are decided by the Presidium (formerly Politbureau) and the Central Committee of the Communist Party. So far, the decision-making power of these institutions has not been challenged, and they have succeeded in keeping secret the way in which their decisions are formulated. Stalin had reduced the Politbureau to passivity, had ignored the Central Committee, and did not convene party congresses, once the scene of free-wheeling debate in the days of Lenin. Immediately after Stalin's death, the Politbureau re-emerged to its old potency as the Presidium. But it was no longer the forum of comrades and friends of 1917, in which disagreement was compatible with solidarity. Now it represented the major interest groups in Soviet society, and its function was to crystallize unanimity on the basis of compromise.

The recent 25th Party Congress has again focused on the basic contradictions of Soviet society, which manifest themselves primarily in the imbalance between so-called heavy industry and consumer goods production. This issue has come up periodically since Stalin's death. It reflects the fact that the bureaucracy finds it much easier to increase access to the virtually inexhaustible supply of raw materials, and to produce heavy machinery for military purposes, transport and mining, than to create a more flexible orientation for agricultural goods (for example, different kinds of tractors better suited for the different kinds of soil in the USSR), more and better spare parts and a wider variety of higher quality consumer goods: textiles, radios, communications equipment, leather goods, etc.

For the planning bureaucracy, modernization, mechanization and automation for purposes of mass consumption are much more complicated than the straightforward demands of the military and producers of raw materials. But it is quite questionable that a hard and fast line can be drawn between the two sectors.

Militarily speaking, Russian planners confront two different tasks. On the Eastern front facing China (and potentially Japan), tanks and bombers have priority, and the equipment of great masses of soldiers is relatively easy to accomplish. But in the West, the Russians must deal with the growing sophistication of American military technology. It is there that the division between production and consumer goods becomes more and more problematic. Advanced weaponry is developed in the laboratory, not in the factory, and success in developing such weaponry depends on education, the intelligentsia and the whole milieu of a truly technological existence. Yet the Russian intelligentsia is increasingly isolated, and the polarization between the narrowly defined military sector and the process of civil production is not only continued but aggravated (this is in part the case because the intellectuals are feared). Can such a society compete effectively?

The 25th Congress, of course, did not face up to the real problems, but the underlying conflicts may have become a little more apparent. When people speak of extending the consumer sector in Russia, they don't mean satisfying elemental survival needs, as in India and China. They are talking about extending the benefits of technological society in the form of the "good life." That implies the spin-off of technology from the military sector to the civilian.

This problem is not unrelated to the growing estrangement between the Soviet bureaucracy and western Communist parties. Ever since 1921, the requirement that western parties strictly accept the Soviet model has caused many problems. In the past, the question of whether Communist parties should participate in "bourgeois democracy" has been at the nub of the problem. Today, the problem is more complicated. The Soviet model is decreasingly relevant to the West, where the problem is the participation of the working class in advanced, post-industrial technological environments. It is not simply a question of giving the western parties more autonomy. The attitudes of the western parties must necessarily have an impact on the Soviet system itself, and on Eastern Europe.

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The real issue then is the transformation of Soviet society. To a large extent, that problem is hidden behind the mask of the "revolutionary" and "liberating" role of Soviet ideology in the Third and Fourth worlds. This masquerade can only be maintained so long as the U.S. seems determined to pursue futile counter-revolutionary policies there.

Soviet "aggressiveness" is a means of maintaining and channeling Soviet retardation—just as America's "tough stand" against that "aggression" is a means of immobilizing great social change in this country. Ironically, the two countries are really quite interdependent, in a vaguely Orwellian sense. Kissinger and Brezhnev, for example, both fear that the Italian Communists will become a government party and succeed, since the fallout would hit both sides.

As for Soviet policy in Angola, the Soviet leaders—whatever Brezhnev may say—have simply used the inevitable trend against South Africa's racial policies against the former Portuguese colonies. Recently Drew Middleton wrote in the *New York Times*: "The Soviet Union has used Cuban troops in Africa." But is it that simple? Was it perhaps Fidel Castro, whose connections with the African liberation movements are closer than either the USSR's or the Americans', who used Russian equipment? Is Castro simply a tool of the Soviets? It may be harder for them to tame Fidel than to "liberate" South Africa.

If "aggression" be the result of a conscious sense of superiority or inferiority, aggression will not occur in the Soviet Union so long as its institutions remain what they are. Their main function is social control, and they exercise control in the face of great failures and only small successes. The Soviet leaders are well aware of their failures.

The sense of adventure is lacking in the Soviet Union. Aggression as a calculated risk, as part of a computer-based game plan, is more a possibility here than there. Although ideologically America appears to stand for the status quo and the Soviet Union for "revolutionary change," this is not reflected in their governmental or social structures. For when we appear to "defend" something, we are liable to bring about changes more fundamental (however inadvertent) than the Soviets. Our efforts to "preserve" the status quo by bringing down governments distasteful to us are more likely to redound to the benefit of the Soviets than their own initiatives.

Compared with the U.S., the Soviet Union is conservative and timid. Soviet foreign policy does not call for the allocation of vastly increased "defense" spendings by the United States. Rather, it calls for some clear and honest thinking about how American policy can be diverted from a self-defeating, futile direction. The Soviet Union stands to gain more from our follies than from its own strength.

TO HOLLAND, WITH LOVE

FREDERICK FRANCK

Rome's gift of Cardinal Willebrands

Pilgrimages to Holland in search of the grail, of the "new" Dutch church, need no longer be planned. . . .

Cardinal Alfrink is in retirement after reaching the age limit so convenient in disposing of prelates who do not enjoy Rome's special admiration. The new archbishop of Utrecht and Primate of the Dutch Church Province, Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, 66, has—in these first three months since the Pope entrusted him with the stewardship over his native country and after a phenomenal career in the Curia—been given more than just the benefit of the doubt. Reactions range from jubilant to cautiously favorable. However, dissonant voices are audible.

"What do you think of Alfrink's successor?" I asked Wim Tepe, O.P., who after a serious illness is now Pastor-Emeritus of Amsterdam's progressive inner-city parish, St. Dominicus.

"Alfrink *has* no successor," he snapped back.

Indeed, Bernardus Alfrink's tenure is already looked back upon with nostalgia by all but the staunchest conservatives. This man of almost superhuman integrity, gentlemanly tact and wisdom, is generally regarded as having been rewarded quite shabbily for his many troubles. "Rome treated him like a dog," is the general opinion.

Indeed, as soon as the sees of Rotterdam and Roermond became vacated by their "open-minded" bishops, they were filled by arch-conservatives, against the clearly expressed wishes of the local church. One of these, Bishop Simonis of Rotterdam, has acted with more common sense than had been expected. His colleague

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of Roermond, Dr. Gijsen, however, is generally considered as a disaster, somewhat of a savonarolean monomaniac. He was foisted on both his diocese, his colleagues and on Alfrink, who had to be personally humiliated by being summoned to Rome to attend Paul VI's consecration of this man, whose appointment has paralyzed the conference of Dutch bishops ever since.

The appointment of a new Dutch Primate must have been a ticklish problem for Rome. The candidate proposed by the Chapter of Utrecht's Diocese, Alfrink's respected and popular assistant, Dr. Vermeulen, would almost certainly have been unable to end the paralysis. A highly diplomatic talent was needed here. Even a radical mind such as Fr. Jan van Kilsdonk, S.J., founder of the Amsterdam Student Parish and famous for his steadfastness when called on the carpet by the Holy Office in 1965, admits that the choice of Willebrands was "a constructive gesture in Roman policy after so many destructive ones."

The press reactions have been fascinating. The *bien-pensant* press, whether Catholic or secular, was all smiles. The right-wing weekly *Elsevier*, a successful pastiche of *Time* or *Newsweek*, celebrated the occasion with 6-pages of applause in its cover story entitled "A Born Conciliator." It welcomed Willebrands as a favorite son and guarantor of a new period of law and order in the noisy Dutch church and hence in the country. The liberal, Dominican-edited *De Bazuin* ("The Trumpet"), a great deal more reserved, headlined its announcement of the nw archbishop: "Under Guardianship."

A prominent member of the Utrecht Pastoral Council called the appointment in a radio broadcast "a slap in the face of the local church." The Protestant and the liberal press expressed astonishment at the meek attitude of 4½ million Catholics in accepting Rome's decision so passively. But others explained that ever since the imposition of the bishops of Rotterdam and Roermond, the prestige of bishops and even the interest in hierarchical politics has apparently waned to the point of indifference.

The new archbishop, Johannes Gerardus Maria Willebrands, was born in 1909 in the small village of Bovenkarspel, a part of Northern Holland the inhabitants of which are often referred to by the rest of Holland as *kaaskoppen*, "cheese heads." The typical *kaaskop* considers himself to be a *nuchtere* Hollander, and is very proud of the adjective *nuchter*, for to be *nuchter* counts as the highest virtue in the local value system. The word is not easily translated. Closest to it is "sober." But it is a sobriety combined with pragmatic horse-sense, forthrightness, industry and thrift. Seen from the outside, however, it also implies a certain rigidity, self-righteousness and above all a conspicuous absence of flights of the imagination, of poetic sensibility. No artist, no mystic, would feel flattered by being praised as a *nuchtere* Hollander.

Jo Willebrands, an exceptionally brilliant student at Hageveld Seminary, after his ordination in 1934 was promptly sent to Rome for further study at the Angelicum asd Gregorian, where he received his doctorate in 1937. For the next three years he did pastoral work in Amsterdam, until in 1940 he was appointed as professor of philosophy at Warmond Seminary, then served as its Director until 1958. During these years his interest in ecumenical matters was awakened. It is perhaps a coincidence that meanwhile in 1948, another Dutchman, the Protestant Minister Visser 't Hooft founded the World Council of Churches. In that same year Professor Willebrands became President of the Willebrord Society, the first Dutch Catholic ecumenical organization, which brought him in working contact with other ecumenical pioneers, as the German Msgr. Hofer, the Roman Frenchman Charles Boyer S.J. and others who together were to constitute the first Vatican antenna directed at the World Council. Prominent among these was the German Cardinal Augustin Bea, the Director of the Biblical Institute and confessor of Pius XII, a man of the noble spirit of John XXIII, whose intimate friend and collaborator he became. The ecumenical boom of the postwar years involved Willebrands in intensive contact with non-Catholics of the caliber of Sweden's Nathan Söderblom, the Metropolitan Germanos, the Patriarch Athenagoras and his fellow Dutchman Visser 't Hooft.

When Pope John in January 1959 revealed his plans for the Second Vatican Council to a shocked audience of cardinals, these new and promising ecumenical activities made it possible to integrate the "separated brethren" into the structure of the Council. For this purpose a "Secretariat for the Unity of Christians" was created of which Cardinal Bea became the President. He in turn appointed young Msgr. Willebrands as its Secretary. As social director, guide and interpreter for the non-Catholic Observers at the Council, he became known as an epitome of courtesy and efficiency.

The Secretariat consisted at the time of only Cardinal Bea, Willebrands, the American Paulist Father Thomas Stransky and the Corsican Msgr. Arrighi. After surviving the Council, it was greatly expanded. Its work during Vatican II had been as important as it had been successful: the Secretariat may be credited with the documents on Freedom of Religion, the Declaration on the Jews and on the Non-Christian Religions. It is generally assumed that it was especially Willebrands' efforts which resulted in the annulment of the mutual anathema which since 1054 had pitted Rome against the Orthodox Church. It was also he who prepared Paul VI's visit to the Headquarters of the World Council in 1969, the year of Cardinal Bea's death at 86. Rumor had it that the American conservative Cardinal

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Wright would succeed Bea at the Secretariat. But, contrary to these expectations and all precedent, indeed against the wishes of some ultra-conservative cardinals, the Pope appointed Secretary Willebrands as its president. It was a remarkable choice at a time when Dutch stock was quoted very low on the Vatican exchange: to be Dutch was to be suspected of heresy if not treason!

In the succeeding years Willebrands, however, was able to gain the full confidence of the most ultra-traditionalists. He even inspired Bishop Simonis of Rotterdam to declare: "The Holy Father loves Holland so deeply that he is willing to part with his right hand in letting Willebrands depart from Rome."

What are Rome's instructions to the Pope's right hand? According to an interview given by the Cardinal to the *Volkskrant*: "I have no specific instructions. If, for instance, I am committed to reconciliation of contrasting attitudes, this is simply part of the general mission of any bishop." According to the prominent Msgr. A. C. Ramselaar: "The Pope expects no doubt from Willebrands that he will take corrective steps in matters like the education of priests and the functioning of married priests in theological education." He also adds darkly: "The problems of *Humanae Vitae* have not yet blown over."

Questions

De Bazuin asks itself a number of interesting questions: "Is the generally favorable reception of Willebrands a symptom of the weakening in self-confidence and of trust in the potential for renewal from within the Dutch church? Does it express a long-repressed nostalgia for dependency on Rome? Have we become frightened by our bold declarations of emancipation and proclamations of adulthood? Are we Dutch Catholics actually still so totally conditioned that we can only mumble 'Thank you, thank you very much!' the moment a Curia cardinal, even though Dutch, is delegated to make it crystal clear that there is no one to be found in this province of the church, who has the competence to be our archbishop?"

Such questions may well have been stimulated by articles like the one in the Protestant Weekly *Hervormd Nederland*: "An adult province of the church is being treated as if it were a naughty and incompetent child. Even if it should happen that a good man has been selected by this purely hierarchical, undemocratic process, it should not blind us to the fact that essentially the appointment is an act of humiliation."

However this may be, the majority of Dutch Catholics has heaved its sigh of relief: at the very least they had been spared a continuation of the Simonis-Gijsen line. Whether Willebrands will be able to keep a Bishop Gijsen in check, whether the line is going to be softer or harder remains to be seen. It is not forgotten here that it was Willebrands' protest that prevented Holland's Catholic poet-laureate, the ex-Jesuit Huub Oosterhuis, from leading the liturgy at the Bangkok Conference of the World Council in 1974, that he condemned publicly Oosterhuis' poetry as being "in no way any longer Catholic."

There are other straws in the wind. Various clerics in Rome describe the cardinal as autocratic and rigid under a very smooth surface. Others remind one of his complete silence when the polemics raged around the Dutch Catechism and during various other painful conflicts. There is also more than a little suspicion that in deference to highest politics he has recently put the brakes on ecumenical progress and that this resulted in the resignation of two of his important collaborators in the Secretariat.

An ex-Dominican acquaintance summed it up. "Look," he said, "there are three distinct attitudes. First you have your run-of-the-mill Catholics, still uncritically identified with the institution. They accept any new cardinal as they accept sunrise. Secondly, there are the right-wingers, whether Catholic or not, who are of course delighted. They got a distinguished Curia cardinal as governor of the province, who can be counted on to keep the rattle-tattle in its place. Then there is a third group, fairly large and mostly intellectual, whose concept of the church has really changed radically since Vatican II. To them, cardinals are of very little importance."

He continued: "What the right-wingers have essentially always held against John XXIII is that he took Christianity so seriously, that he threatened to scuttle the world's first multi-national. Willebrands has clearly been sent to represent the multi-national. So let him."

Fr. Van Kilsdonk believes that Willebrands may well be able to reestablish a certain unity in the Dutch Bishops' Conference, but he questions the quality of a unity which might politely circumambulate both the real tasks and the real problems. "I am particularly afraid," he said, "that the concept of 'unity,' as is so often the case in Catholic as well as in Communist discussion, is going to be used as an instrument of blackmail against all honest opposition."

In his first interviews and contacts the new archbishop has been both energetic and, as could be expected, extremely diplomatic. It is generally felt that as far as his own archdiocese of Utrecht is concerned, he might well be the right man. Its 900,000 members are predominantly lower-middle-class with a negligible ultra-conservative fringe, and the far left has lost all interest in confrontations with the institution. No doubt Willebrands' appearance, his carefully chosen words, his very tone of voice will make him a respected, perhaps a beloved archbishop. The ground has been admirably prepared by Alfrink, who seeing that the

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Church could only survive (the number of priests decreased by 20 percent since 1965 and of the remaining ones almost 50 percent are between 50 and 60) by integrating a considerable number of laymen in diocesan work, formerly done by priests. This he did.

But being Archbishop of the diocese of Utrecht may be the easiest of Willebrands' tasks. More difficult will be the reestablishment of a modicum of real cooperation in the Bishops' Conference. Moreover this "right hand of the Pope" is staying on as President of the Secretariat of Christian Unity in Vatican City. There will be no lack of contact with the home office.

Not only in Holland, but also elsewhere, in France for instance and by no one less than Yves Congar, O.P., Willebrands is being mentioned as a most suitable candidate for the Chair of Peter. Whatever his chances may be, a careful study of his interviews, his utterances, show that this erudite *kaaskop* of supreme intelligence has blossomed into a thoroughly and reliably romanized prelate after an exceptional career. Is it possible, as some speculate, that his present stint in Holland is a final internship in pastoral experience? He said of himself that he would have preferred to return to his native land in order to just "live quietly, to meditate, to study and to write." But then he emphasizes: "I am accepting my new task with confidence and with love."

Is this not the phraseology that would sound perfect from the balcony of the Piazza San Pietro?

IN MEMORY OF ARCHBISHOP ROBERTS

GORDON C. ZAHN

Recalling a courageous and forward-looking man

Death at the age of 82 can scarcely be described as "untimely." Even so, the passing of a friend is never to be taken lightly, and I am sure the readers of *Commonweal* expect more than the retelling of one of his more famous quips—the one about discouraging the kissing of his episcopal ring by carrying it in the back pocket of his trousers—to mark the loss of Archbishop T. D. Roberts, S.J. He made too many important contributions to issues this journal has supported, and his leadership cost him far too much in the way of personal alienation and occasional indignity, to simply let it go at that.

This is not to say, of course, that Roberts would not have enjoyed such a brief and jolly farewell wave. His reputation for the sly and sometimes irreverent witticism (often enough with himself as the butt of the joke) was well earned. He did delight in poking fun whenever possible at the extravagant pomposities of ritual and ceremony and, with a certain added touch of sharpness, at those who, in his opinion, placed altogether too much stock in such things. I recall on one occasion when I was serving briefly as one of his unofficial "periti" at Vatican II, he made a point of not attending a formal canonization ceremony (which, if the truth be known, I would have loved to witness!) simply because he had so little patience with that sort of display. We strolled about the gardens overlooking Rome instead, and—who knows?—his may have been the better idea after all.

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It is perhaps natural, but still lamentable, that the obituary notes have stressed the "controversial Jesuit" and "maverick archbishop" side of his character and failed to put this in its proper context. He was a courageous man, and that courage did find its expression in a continuing sequence of forward-looking statements and actions for which he should be remembered long after the testy and chuckle-provoking one-liners have lost their point. It was no small thing, for instance, that he took it upon himself to challenge the arrangement whereby English and Portuguese clerics took turns in serving as Archbishops of Bombay and saw to it that the post was opened to native Indian clergy instead. And if, as it seems clear, his impatience to see this change accomplished required that he take actions which forced the papal hand, he simply went ahead and took them.

Instead of basking quietly in the prestige associated with the status of a retired archbishop once he returned to London, he chose instead to lend that prestige to a variety of relatively unpopular causes. Though not a pacifist, he gave support to the movements designed to ban nuclear weapons and end the threat of nuclear war. He was, for a time at least, virtually the only Catholic ecclesiastic of his rank willing to speak out in favor of official church recognition of and support for conscientious objection. His contribution to this cause—he preferred the term "conscientious abstention"—cannot be valued too highly. Other prelates may have been "open" to the practice, some even willing to give private assurances of support, but it was Roberts who was pre-

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pared to go publicly on record when doing so was certain to be interpreted by his critics as just one more proof of an ungovernable urge to "embarrass" the church.

Roberts prepared an intervention on the topic for Vatican II but was unable to deliver it in person. In one of the shabbiest episodes in the history of that august assembly, he was maneuvered out of the opportunity to speak even though more than the required number of bishops had signed petitions to assure him the floor. The intervention became part of the written record, of course, but the satisfaction and the recognition he would have drawn from actually addressing his fellow bishops were denied him.

Of course, he may have been lucky to be there at all. I recall a breakfast discussion with a prominent American Jesuit shortly before the first session of the Council was to open. He was about to leave for Rome, he told me, to protest and, if possible, block the participation of "a pinko Archbishop from Bombay." We can be grateful that his efforts did not succeed. At the same time, we should realize that such bitter opposition to him personally, and more important, to the positions he had taken were present within his Order as well as at other and higher levels of the institutional church. These could not have gone unnoticed by a man of Roberts' keen intellect and sensitivity, and the knowledge must have hurt him deeply.

The issues that brought him most notoriety and criticism, of course, were his open opposition to the arbitrary exercise of ecclesiastical authority (especially in his book *Black Popes* and his contribution to John Todd's *Problems of Authority*) and his daring challenge to the traditional condemnation of all forms of artificial contraception. His "breakthrough" article in *Search* opened a heated debate with Britain's Cardinal Heenan and the entire hierarchy of England and Wales. Already the object of an official complaint to Rome filed by Archbishop O'Hara, an American then serving as Apostolic Delegate in London, because of "indiscretions" allegedly found in his writings and public statements, Roberts' willingness to strike out on a predictably unpopular course is further evidence of his courageous commitment to the truth as he saw it.

This, of course, is the theme that unites all the positions that brought him so much attention and, with it, so much misunderstanding. To see him simply as the unpredictable "maverick" or, even worse, as the "rebel" for the mere sake of rebellion is to have a totally false impression of the man and what he was about. The one consistent note in all his work was the dedicated opposition to the *abuse* of authority, to the *arbitrary* imposition of authority beyond its proper sphere. He was, if the fact be known, the most "loyal" of Catholics in the best sense of that term. That he loved the church and his Order with the purest intensity should be clear enough from the long and devoted service he gave to both—and, not the least of his many accomplishments, from the profound influence he had upon the many who came to him for spiritual care and guidance throughout his years of residence at London's Farm Street Church. Critical though he may have been of some of the personage in the Curia or even on the Throne of Peter and of the policies they imposed upon the church universal and the faithful, he did not deny the legitimacy of the authority vested in their institutional roles. On more than one occasion, he made it clear to me in private conversations that, if he could be shown a valid theological justification for the condemnation of "the pill," he would accept it; his principal opposition to what he regarded as an unjustifiable attempt to reduce the issue to a simple question of authority and obedience.

A tribute by Peter Hebblethwaite published in the London *Tablet* makes the point: "Roberts' obedience, however paradoxical this may seem, was deeply Jesuit. That is to say it was a reasoned and motivated obedience, the obedience of a 'reasonable man,' not the automatic reaction of 'the stick in the hands of an old man.'" From this, by direct logical progression, stem his endorsement of conscientious "abstention," his openness toward chemical (as distinct from mechanical) means of contraception, his support of the work of Amnesty International and all the other stands which contributed to his not always favorable image as a storm center of ecclesiastical controversy.

I am sure Roberts himself would have no objection if this somewhat distorted picture were the only memory he left behind: he did enjoy adding a bit of spice to an otherwise dull intellectual or theological atmosphere. Even more important, it would be somewhat out of character for him to be overly concerned with what people thought of him while he was alive or after he was gone. Be that is it may, it is extremely gratifying to those of us who benefited so much from knowing him as a friend to note the extent to which he was finally given a measure of recognition and honor at the end. The report I have is that the present Apostolic Delegate asked the Jesuits to be permitted to serve as chief concelebrant at the Requiem in which he was joined by ten other bishops and 40 priest concelebrants, not counting the many more priests in the congregation. The funeral address was delivered by Bishop Christopher Butler, O.S.B., auxiliary in Westminster, a man well known here as in England for his intellectual eminence and for the many crucial contributions he made to Vatican II.

The Archbishop's frequently expressed wish—and I recall hearing it from him on more than one occasion —was that he be cremated and his ashes scattered in the sea he loved so much. This was not done; instead he is buried in the Jesuit plot in a West London ceme-

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tery. There is little doubt that he would have seen this decision, too, as an arbitrary exercise of authority and voiced some protest. On the other hand, since it involved something he would have regarded as relatively inconsequential, the disposition of his earthly remains, it is unlikely he would have raised much of a fuss.

THE SCREEN

Walt Disney's most durable creations were a set of animal characters that always seemed at once both familiar and divine, a set of characters that followed from the 1927 appearance of a mouse named Mortimer. After starring in two silent cartoons and the first synch-sound animation, *Steamboat Willie*, Mortimer of course became Mickey. Under Disney's shrewd eye and the hand of chief animator Ub Iwerks, the whole Disney menagerie followed like the cast of Genesis. First Minnie was created from a part of the personality of Mickey, like Eve from Adam's rib, then they begat Pluto and Goofy and Donald Duck and Daisy, who begat Huey, Dewey and Louie, etc. (If you think my religious conceit a bit much, you obviously don't know that Mickey is now in the pantheon of a Hindu temple.)

Mickey himself seems finally to have passed away sometime between 1955 and 1960, when Disney Productions admitted to an official policy of reissuing old Mickey Mouse cartoons without making new ones. The exact date of Mickey's death is unknown, as befits a figure of legend. Like all mythic heroes, however, Mickey prepared a sacred burial ground for himself—indeed, a veritable Valhalla—before he died. I mean Disneyland, the only worthy memorial there could have been. Mouseketeers, *Love Bugs*, and other live productions may seem an ignominniemouse end for the disnasty, but at Disneyland and Disney World the memory lingers on.

Yet the Mickey Mouse cartoons represented only one side of Disney's imagination, and for all Mickey's divinity, it was really the earthier side. The other side of Disney's imagination is only half remembered now because it went into eclipse back in the early 1940s. While the side that has continued to shine on us began with the Mickey Mouse cartoons of the early 1930s, the other side of Disney's imagination began with the *Silly Symphonies* cartoon series of the same period. This series embodied a more abstract and free-form kind of Disney fancy that was keyed to the non-visual inspirations of music. The series began with the 1929 production *Skeleton Dance*, whose title characters are set a-jangling to Saint-Saens' "Danse Macabre." The work that followed included *Flowers and Trees* (1932), *Music Land* (1935) and *The Farmyard Symphony* (1938). What put an end to the series in 1939 was a purely financial consideration. Mickey Mouse was enormously popular while the *Silly Symphonies* were not. Before they went into their final eclipse, though, they produced a memorial of their own, a feature-length swan song that is perhaps Disney's greatest work: *Fantasia*.

As the orchestra warms up at the beginning of the film, a commentator explains that although there will later be music intended to tell stories, commemorate history, etc., first we shall hear a piece of "pure" music, Bach's "Toccata and Fugue in D Minor." The visual equivalents Disney's people concocted for this were based on compositions by artist Oscar Fischinger and looked unlike anything else Disney ever did. Yet in a sense this abstraction is an appropriate introduction to *Fantasia*, for *Fantasia* itself is a kind of abstraction, and therefore a revelation, of all Disney's work. In the six pieces of music that followed the Bach "Toccata" there is a pattern which is described in all Disney's other feature films as well. In *Fantasia* this pattern is like a symphony in two movements, the second one of which repeats and develops the themes of the first. The first movement contains passages from "The Nutcracker Suite," Dukas' "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" and Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring." The second movement contains Beethoven's "Pastorale," Ponchielli's "Dance of the Hours" and Moussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain."

But what the music is matters less than how Disney rendered it visually. "The Nutcracker Suite" is a ballet of female dragonflies and flowers. "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" is a parade of maniacal, water-carrying broomsticks. "The Rite of Spring" is an animated re-creation of the prehistory of volcanoes, behemoths and cataclysmic weather changes. In generic terms, I suppose the bases Disney was tagging here might be called the idyllic, the comic and the tragic. But that is a bit too tony. Something more like the sentimental, the funny and the scary would be closer to it, and in the second half of the film Disney repeated them in that order. Besides the six works forming the film's two movements, there are three pieces of music rendered impressionistically—the Bach "Toccata," an instrument test entitled "the Sound Track" and Schubert's "Ave Maria" —that divide and bracket the two movements. And even these seem to follow an approximate pattern from romantic sentiment to laughter to awe.

That the formalist side of Disney's imagination apparent in *Fantasia* was not at odds with the popular side is shown by the presence of Mickey Mouse in the film. Mickey does a guest spot in the role of the sorcerer's apprentice and somehow fits right in with the abstract construction of the film. Actually, how he does so can be seen from Disney's treatment of the one element that all the sequences in the film have in com-

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mon: water. Water is in fact the most prominent setting for the action of the film. Besides "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" and the Tchaikovsky passage, Beethoven's "Pastorale" is given a water setting, first a lake on which winged horses alight and then a storm from which fauns and centaurs take shelter. The focus of "The Rite of Spring" is the ever-diminishing water holes over which the primeval beasts fight. Even "The Dance of the Hours" manages to put at center stage a fountain into which the improbable ballerinas continually fall.

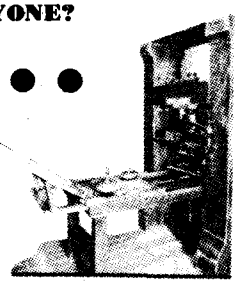
Disney was fascinated with water and went to great lengths to discover and render its behavior accurately. His artists even drew upon scientific experiments in ultra-high speed photography of the splash and flow patterns of water. For all the realism that the applications of water have in *Fantasia*, however, what strikes us is the unreality of its effects. If Disney cartoons have a single, stylistic touchstone, a point at which their artistic style and philosophical content meet, it is in the rendering of water. It is in the fact that water never makes anything wet in a Disney film. From a good dousing to a near drowning like Mickey's in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," receding water always leaves clothes dry and unwrinkled, activities unabated and spirits undampened. No matter how overwhelming a cause, water never has any effect, and this seems emblematic of all human experiences in Disney's films. Life in his cartoons is utterly virginal, utterly without consequences. Mischance, disaster and catastrophe roll off the human condition like water off Donald Duck's back.

It could be argued that the Disney cartoon features were the quintessence of commercial moviemaking, for such moviemaking is by nature a collaborative effort and nowhere more so than in Disney's films. But with a collaborative effort you can make a wide range of products—a Detroit automobile, for instance, or a Gothic cathedral. *Fantasia* was part of Disney's work that fell more on the side of the Gothic cathedral. The discontinuation of the *Silly Symphonies* and of their tendencies after *Fantasia* seems to have been a conscious decision by Disney to play down whatever was expressionistic or avant-garde in his work. These music-inspired films had been the source not only of technical experimentation—*Flowers and Trees* utilized technicolor in 1932, and *Fantasia* was made in stereophonic sound—but of the greatest stylistic liberties. Yet *Fantasia* was not some way-out film for Disney, but a central one. Although it may have abstracted the sentiments and effects of other Disney films in a singular fashion, abstraction itself was of the essence in all those Disney films. They all abstracted human experience and rendered the world in such a way that we would know any adversity or grief was just a passing fancy. That was their charm.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

ARMAGEDDON, ANYONE?

PRESS



Headline from the *New York Times* of November 23, 1975:

EXPERTS DOUBT VIEW THAT ATOM BLAST COULD END ALL LIFE

It's hard to keep some problems in focus. The poor, for example, are always with us, but it's hard always to think of them. The same goes for nuclear weapons. They have been with us for thirty years and a cause of—how shall we put it?—*continuing concern*, but most of the time we are thinking of other things. I know, roughly, what a bomb would do to Manhattan, where I live, but it's hard to look out the window and think that one day it will be a smoking plain. You see such things only in erratic flashes.

A dozen years ago, for example, I went up to Plattsburgh, N.Y., for an Air Force physical and spent the night in the Bachelor Officers' Quarters. My roommate was a young B-52 navigator who owned a 750 cc. Triumph motorcycle and a Corvette. Before he went to bed he did 50 push-ups and 100 sit-ups. After he finished we talked about his motorcycle, his car and his work. On an average day, he said, he took off from Plattsburgh around ten in the morning, flew down the East Coast to Atlanta, turned west to St. Louis, then north to Chicago and finally on back to Plattsburgh, arriving in plenty of time for dinner.

I asked if they carried nuclear weapons on board.

"Of course," he said. "That's the whole idea. Not to get caught on the ground."

I asked if he and his crew would have any hesitation about dropping their bomb, if it came to that.

"No," he said. "We have so many things to do, so many check lists to work through, that we'd be over the target before we knew it. Besides, that's what they pay us for."

I didn't doubt him for a minute.

Headline from the *Washington Post* of April 5, 1976:

ISRAELI A-BOMBS PUT AT 13

The major newspapers, newsmagazines and broadcast networks all have Pentagon reporters and along with the stories about closing military bases they report from time to time on the ultimate question. They can write knowledgeably about first and second strike capabilities, "city busting," "throw-weights," deterrence, hard and soft missile sites, the difference between MIRVs

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and MARVs, and the like. I have no complaints about their seriousness or expertise, but sometimes I wish their language wasn't so flat, careful and judicious. Sometimes I wish they would describe the officials a bit, tell me something of their faces and voices when they argue for doubling the size of warheads. But it would be out of place, and it would absorb too much of their limited space, nudging out facts, and the news paragraph itself, short and dense, is unsuited to vivid writing. Besides, it's hard to maintain a sense of alarm.

I suppose that Leslie Gelb and Drew Middleton of the *Times* have their moments of sudden fear when they hear sirens at night, like everybody else. The art of the siren has made a lot of progress in recent years. They used to just wail, but now they warble, or let out foghorn blasts that make you all but start up out of your chair. Almost everyone will confess to the sudden half-fear—*is this it?*—when a siren catches them unprepared, but we would think it odd if Gelb and Middleton put that sort of thing into their grey columns of newsprint. Would their editors grow irritated if they insisted on appending a paragraph or two on radiation burn to every story? Would we? I suspect we would.

All the same I wish there were some way to make the danger seem real. It seemed real enough to me when I was ten and used to have air-raid alerts at the Siwanoy School in Pelham, just outside New York. We knew it was only practice, just in case, but I don't remember talking or laughing during the drills.

They led us out into the central corridor and sat us down on the linoleum floor, backs to the wall, away from the windows. They showed us how to bend over, heads between our knees, to protect our eyes from glare and shattering glass. That made it real for 20 minutes, but of course Gelb and Middleton can't go on repeating such stories forever. I, myself, have never written about this before, and I probably never will again.

Headline from the *New York Times* of February 1, 1976:

> WORLD'S SPENDING
> ON ARMS REPORTED
> AT RECORD LEVELS
>
> ---
>
> Study Places Annual Outlay
> at $300 billion—Fastest
> Rise in Developing Lands
>
> ---
>
> U.S. and Soviet Account for
> 60% of Expenditure
> Gain Sharpest in Mideast

It is unusual for an arms story to make the front page. The last one I remember was the ABM story, which captured attention as much for its elements of political melodrama as for the inherent significance of the proposed ABM program itself. The usual position for arms stories is somewhere around page 13. They are almost always one-day stories. Something is reported about the B-1 bomber—a rise in cost, say, to $21 billion for a fleet of 244—and that is the last you hear about the B-1 for awhile.

But if you were to clip the papers methodically for a year or two you would notice, I think, how vast, inexorable and immutable the world's arms programs are. In every corner of the globe governments squeeze every available penny of revenue or credit for arms. India, Iran and Saudi Arabia are only three recent big spenders. The passion for arms is universal. Every Palestinian kid in Lebanon wants his own Kalashnikov assault rifle, just as every national leader wants his own air force, and both generally get what they want. This isn't entirely crazy. In Deadwood, South Dakota, a hundred years ago it probably made a sort of sense to carry a gun, especially if you wanted to carry money too. The difference here is that the great powers carry guns of unprecedented caliber, and that the world's well-being demands they *never* go off. Never is a long time. It seems the more improbable when you stop to consider that up until now the world's great armies have *always* gone to war sooner or later. The great fleet of Darius, the Roman Legions, the Spanish Armada and the Wehrmacht were all intended for war, and that is what they were used for. Why should the present situation end any differently? Of course we all hope it will end differently, but is hope enough?

When you stop to think of these things clearly and logically the situation looks bleak indeed. We have had peace of a sort for thirty years, but there was peace of an even better sort for 42 years between the Franco-Prussian and First World Wars. We're not in the mood for war, perhaps, but we're certainly ready for it, and if we wait at the ready long enough, the mood may steal over us. I don't have the figures but I would suspect that since 1950 every quarter has seen a rise in the number and size of nuclear weapons ready for war. Not only has the total megatonnage increased, but the means of delivery have steadily progressed as well. Missiles are more accurate and better protected. Their capacity for destruction is very great, although not quite as great as is sometimes supposed. My friend Tim Ferris, who knows a lot about these things, points out that even a really major nuclear war—what Herman Kahn used to call a "spasm war," in which everybody shot off everything—would not destroy all life. Human life, yes, but not all other sorts. The human episode on earth would be ended, but not the planet itself. That is what you would call faint comfort.

Take a minute right now and try to imagine all the people, all over the globe, who are ready—right now, at this very instant, whether you are reading this article

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at noon or midnight—to fire all the missiles. From South Dakota to Novosibirsk, and in all the oceans between, there are men on duty—at this very instant!—ready to push the buttons.

I know it's difficult to think of so many people in so many places, all at the same time. I find it easier to imagine the men on the aircraft carriers. They are far from being our first line of nuclear attack or defense, but they have their bombs too. In the summer of 1966 or 1967—I forget which—I spent a day on the U.S. Aircraft Carrier Saratoga in the Mediterranean, watching military exercises. Two things remain in my mind.

One was the Phantom jets taking off at night. The noise was simply incredible, even with ear plugs. The whole ship seemed to vibrate with the roar. The flame pouring from engine exhausts lit up the ocean more brightly than the moon. After awhile the engines were backed down and the roar and the light disappeared, leaving a whisper and a fading red glow, no brighter than a cigarette across a football field, as the Phantoms shot off through the darkness toward their targets.

The other thing I remember was a tour the following morning of one of the hangar decks. We passed machine shops and storage rooms and aircraft in the huge between-decks space like a factory floor while our guide pointed out this and that, never at a loss for some statistics or fact. Then we approached an area where two Marines were carrying rifles on guard. There was no sign on the big door behind them and I asked why there were guards standing in front of it, thinking a-ha! here's the brig.

Our guide said nothing. His mouth opened and he looked unhappy as he groped for some way to say he was not allowed to say.

So I thought, of course. The ship has a nuclear capability, and this is where they keep the bombs. I imagine they're still right there, in the same place on the same ship, if they haven't been replaced by better, bigger and newer models.

Headline from the *Washington Post* of February 9, 1976:

NIXON 'A-THREAT' CLARIFIED

The "threat" was delivered in the summer of 1974 when Nixon told two members of the House, "At any moment I could go into the next room, push a button and 20 minutes later 60 million people would be dead." A second version of the quote has Nixon saying, "I can go into my office and pick up the telephone, and in 25 minutes 70 million people will be dead." The threat had to be "clarified" (by Sen. Alan Cranston, the source of the story) because it was not really a threat at all, but only a comment by the President intended to show how precarious the world was, and how important the pursuit of peace. In any event both versions of Nixon's comment strike me as hyperbolic, although the second is perhaps faintly more plausible than the first. I can't see how a President could trigger a spasm war with one button or one telephone call, out of the clear blue, just like that.

But that simply begs the point. There is no question that the President of the United States, or the Chairman of the Communist party of the Soviet Union, could, if he wished, and if he went about it with a clear head, trigger a political crisis which would precipitate a war. It might take a bit longer than 20 or 25 minutes, but the end result would be the same. This would be so awful that it is hard—perhaps even impossible—to imagine anyone doing it, but you might have said the same thing of the First and Second World Wars, too, with a little foresight, and yet they happened all the same. In 1890 the German military strategist Helmuth von Moltke (the elder) wrote:

> If the war which has hung over our heads, like the sword of Damocles, for more than ten years past, ever breaks out, its duration and end cannot be foreseen. The greatest powers of Europe, armed as never before, will then stand face to face. No one power can be shattered in one or two campaigns so completely as to confess itself beaten, and conclude peace on hard terms. It may be Seven Years'

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War; it may be Thirty Years' War—woe to him who first sets fire to Europe . . .

Von Moltke did not have all the details right, but the gravity of his foreboding was hardly unjustified. It took 24 years but war came in the end, and it was just as bad as he had feared.

No one wants war now, either, but they're ready for it, and they are getting readier. Nixon and Kissinger tried to do something about this, but we all know what happened to them. It is hard to get everybody to agree on the same policy at the same time. When Kissinger was working on détente, Anthony Lewis of the *Times* was writing about Valery Panov, the dancer, who couldn't get a visa to leave Russia. We have got Panov, finally, but I am not so sure we have got détente anymore.

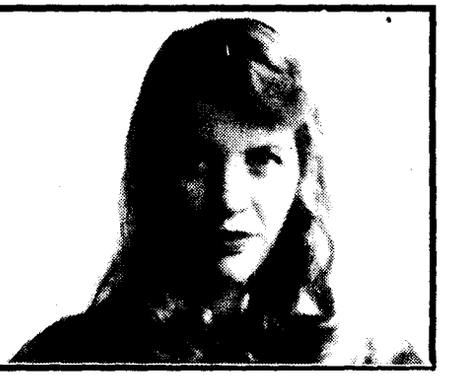
In the summer I go to Vermont, where my family has a farm. There is an abandoned pasture on a mountain-top across the valley, where the view and the blackberries are both magnificent. I take the children sometimes and after we are tired of picking—which for them comes very quickly—we lie on the grass and look up at the sky. Once in awhile, way up there, I see a white vapor trail. It is so high up there is no sound. All my life I have seen those vapor trails, like a scalpel cut across the blue, but until I went to Plattsburgh I never knew where the planes were coming from, or where they were going. Now I know, and I think: One day all the planes will go up at once, and no one will call them back.

But then the children grow restless, and it's time to take them home, and I forget.

THOMAS POWERS

THE POET AS CULT GODDESS

SAUL MALOFF



SYLVIA PLATH became a cult goddess not because she was a great poet—indeed her achievement as a poet is highly problematic—but because she committed suicide at an early age. That she was an attractive woman helped elevate her to that curious pantheon; and so too the fact that she was the mother of two small children and had recently been abandoned by her husband, the uncommonly gifted poet Ted Hughes. That she was at the time living in an alien land, bereft, desolate, sick—all these are significant components in the construction of that iconic figure—the poet as victim and martyr.

Other elements contributed to her canonization: that her actual death seemed a literal enactment of the ritual suicide of the poems and a consummation of the earlier failed attempt which was solemnized in her posthumous novel, *The Bell Jar*, a novel of considerable biographical though small or no intrinsic literary interest—and hence a numinous object for undiscriminating cultists though it is really part of the juvenilia. (Berryman's posthumous "novel," which is scarcely that in any sense, is another striking example of a work whose interest lies in what it tells us of the poet's harrowing battle-to-the-death with alcohol; there are, of course, numerous other examples of how our strange fascination with violent death overpowers our rational faculties.)

In Plath's schoolgirlish novel nothing is imagined; the events come straight out of the life, untransfigured; madness and suicide are facts like any other. No insight, no illumination, no irony, no following wisdom. The events are chronological, monochromatic, sequential; the reader, appalled by the flatness of narration, may even find himself thinking that had the madness and self-burial occurred *before* the reported antecedent events, the latter, by that device, might have assured a power and awesomeness they do not otherwise possess, though only for those acolytes most disposed to invest them with magical properties. The book yields nothing of the kind; in it, madness and suicide are random events, forms of tantrum, self-indulgent, excessive—so to speak, unearned. Causeless—uncaused—in the literary sense; unmotivated, motiveless. Gratuitous. In literature we are not inclined to press the point beyond the terms of the work itself, beyond the reaches of its metaphors. Bovary's suicide, say, or Karenina's, is a necessary and sufficient act—as we say: inevitable; in life, which is cumbersome, inconvenient, contrary, murky, we are at a loss to account for the complex act and settle, because we cannot tolerate uncertainty, for the season's platitudes or the casebook's compendium of clinical "causes" or, far less often, a decent reticence in the presence of mystery. It might have been otherwise, but it was not. Why? Of good art we say: life is thus and not otherwise. In life, we look for a plausible fiction; both for a linear progression of events moving

SAUL MALOFF *is the author of* Happy Families *and, most recently,* Heartland (*Scribner's*).

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toward a fated end and for a surprising concatenation of occurrences that contains any number of conflicting possibilities but in which one, and only one, makes better "art" than the others. Only one is necessary.

The plausible fiction of Sylvia Plath's life is transparent as a windowpane; disconcertingly trite, a perfect period piece, a caricature of the American girl and woman-child, the manufactured product, milk chocolate and honey in a heart-shaped box tied with yards of pink ribbon. Like an excess of the confection, she can be sickening. She smiles and smiles and smiles, a fixed expression signifying an emotional range no wider than a mouth: the American Girl as recruiting poster for immortal bliss in the here and now. She's fun; fun to know, fun to be with, fun at a party, fun to have around. Every day, in every way, things are getting better and better, in this best of all possible worlds. In the glow of her radiance we know there can be no failure, no disappointment, no grief, no death. She is the girl you knew you could bring home to mother and Dad; the girl with the magical glands who can grow from child to teenager (the word entered the vocabulary when she appeared on the historical scene, dressed in saddle shoes, cashmere sweater, pleated skirt, in the Eisenhower Fifties) to wife and mother and grandmother without ever ceasing to be a child. She is our sunshine. Her smile and lilting laughter tells us the only sin is not to feel good—quite good enough, good all over.

Sylvia Plath's "letters home" (all save a handful written to her mother Aurora from the time she left home in Wellesley, Massachusetts, in 1950 for

Sylvia Plath's "letters home" (all save death in 1963)* are truly appalling. Her doting, demanding, purblind mother—a classic instance of the woman who reigns by "sacrificing everything" for her husband and children—got just the letters she required, as if by implicit understanding. The least "Sivvy" could be was perfect in every way—as student, as friend and companion to her widowed mother, as elder sister to her brother; and the least she could do was show it in everything she did and said, all the time. To do otherwise was an act of betrayal. Throughout the high school years she had been and done all that; and now, thanks to her mother's sacrifices and the benefactions of a patroness, she was going to *Smith*, and it went without saying that a brilliant future awaited her there, and thereafter. Sivvy addresses her as "Dearest-Mother-whom-I-love-better-than-anybody" in reporting her numerous triumphs. Always a prize-collector, she went right on collecting them, publishing story after story in such magazines as *Seventeen* until she hit the jackpot, the *Mademoiselle* prize: "ME! Of all people!" From that euphoria she plummets four days later to the abyss upon seeing how much better than she are the other student-waitresses in the college dining hall: "Mademoiselle seems quite unreal, and I am exhausted, scared, incompetent, unenergetic and generally low in spirits . . . completely uprooted and clumsy"; and two days later she tells "Mum" she can make a story of the experience and the "ending would be very positive and constructive." In any case, she decides she just doesn't "care what people think about me as long as I'm always open, nice, and friendly." Above all else, she hopes she "can continue to lay more laurels at your feet," the feet of "the most wonderful mummy a girl ever had . . ." Between "supreme despair" and "dizzy joy"—the intensities and fevers of adolescent malaise between which she is always "ricocheting"—there is nothing, a blank; there is no middle voice. Supreme joy is occasioned by the smallest success—a prize, a high grade, some other token of recognition; and it is gone just as quickly, and unaccountably, and in its stead there is its other face—utter misery. Both extremes, of course, are widely incommensurate with outer circumstance. Yet always, she assures her mother, darkness, a temporary aberration, will soon yield to light, and is probably nothing more than one of those things, a nuisance, or a touch of her old devil, sinusitis, in the ruinous depredations of which she and her mother are great believers. Nothing was so radically wrong that it couldn't be righted by another prize; and she was a girl who had everything.

The small cracks in the column appear very early, and persist. It would have required no penetrating vision to see that all the prizes in the world would not have sufficed; in fact, the most glittering prizes were followed by the bleakest inner weathers. Amid the flow of her daily life as it appears in the letters there's a vast empty space, a cemetery occupied by a single tombstone, her father's: Otto Plath is virtually never mentioned in these nearly seven hundred letters, as if by a pact between mother and daughter. He will reappear, of course, explosively, as "Daddy" or as a felt presence, in the late poems, to be blasted by his daughter's ferocious vengeance, loathing, maimed and thwarted love. Aurelia Plath too will appear in the work, most notably in the nasty, scurrilous portrait in *The Bell Jar*; and so too with everyone else who crossed her path: the novel is full of venomous little sketches. Self-pity excepted, spitefulness is the only powerful running feeling. Everything carefully excluded from the letters went into the work—as if having been nice too long she could now be horrid a while. Art as revenge.

Beneath the sugary blandness, the dark themes of madness and suicide appear in two guises: as a "way of speaking" which is deeply embedded in the general language and therefore seems "innocent" enough; and as something like a distress signal. The light little references to killing herself, to death, to suicide—the kind we all make and never "mean"—give way early (in 1950) to an odd strategy. She tells her mother of being "rather worried about a friend of mine" a Smith girl in "such a state of numbness that she didn't feel any emotion

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* *Letters Home*, by Sylvia Plath. *Correspondence 1950-1963*. Selected and Edited with Commentary by Aurelia S. Plath; Harper & Row; $12.50.

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except . . . this panic" and who had taken to saving sleeping pills and razor blades. Before confessing all this to Sylvia the girl's "usual gaiety had been getting brighter and more artificial as the days went by" but now she could think of nothing better than to commit suicide, though she thought it would be "more convenient . . . if she killed herself at home." Commenting on this in a footnote, Aurelia Plath, in a moment of rarest candor, notes that the "girl" was in fact not suicidal and that "perhaps Sylvia's . . . depression was influencing her words here. Yet when Sylvia found herself in a similar state two years later, razor blades and sleeping pills were her first thoughts." Two years later, following the whirl of the most dizzying triumph of her life to that point (the big prize itself, the *Mademoiselle* stint as college editor) and the subsequent crash related in the novel straight from life, Sylvia waited until she got home, the deepest recesses of home, the farthest bowels of its cellar, and crawling into it, stuffed with pills she had "saved," waited for death, only to be saved at the last minute and taken to a psychiatric hospital for extended treatment, including electric shock.

In one of her more interesting and revealing letters, written from England four years later, she's back to whistling in the dark: "I am most grateful and glad," she tells her "Dearest of Mothers," "that I banged up all at once . . . for I can't tell you how my whole attitude to life has changed! I would have run into trouble sooner or later with my very rigid, brittle, almost hysterical tensions which split me down the middle, between inclination and inhibition, ideal and reality. My whole session with Dr. B. is responsible for making me a rich, well-balanced, humorous, easy-going person, with a joy in daily life, including all its imperfections: sinus, weariness, frustration, and all those niggling things we all have to bear. I am occasionally depressed now, or discouraged, especially when I wonder about the future, but instead of fearing those low spots as the beginning of a bottomless whirlpool, I know I have already faced The Worst (total negation of self) and that having lived through that blackness, like Peer Gynt . . . I can enjoy life simply for what it is. . . ."

By then, she had won a Fulbright and was embarked on a two-year stay at Cambridge; and she was about to meet her redeemer, Ted Hughes. The euphoria bursts all previous restraints; is unlimited, illimitable. She felt, she writes, "like the princess on the glass hill" waiting for her "knight"—the role she cast Hughes in: the "extraordinary male counterpart" to herself, as her mother says—whether or not he was, as Sylvia plaintively says, the "intelligent, loving, liberal father I have always longed for." Ecstasy—and it was a kind of ecstasy, a doomed ecstasy. Certainly it released a surging flow of feeling, of poems. Earlier, she had been terrified that "if I wasn't successful writing, no one would find me interesting or valuable"; and this theme appears again and again, a powerful motif in her deepest life. "Muteness is sickness," she writes, quoting Richard Wilbur; she speaks of a "growing horror at my inarticulateness; each day of not-writing made me feel more scared" and adds: "I would smother if I didn't write." But all that was over now.

She and Hughes, full of a sensed power, were driven by ambition—to make poems, to develop, to be recognized, to rise above the horde of quivering poets, their contemporaries. "I'm living like mad," she tells her brother; and to her mother: "I'm so struck full of joy and love I can scarcely stop a minute from dancing, writing poems, cooking and living . . . I have written the seven best poems of my life which make the rest look like baby-talk. I am learning and mastering new words each day, and drunker than Dylan, harder than Hopkins, younger than Yeats in my saying. Ted reads in his strong voice; is my best critic, as I am his." Recognition came, but more for Hughes than for her.

Then, after their American sojourn, and their return to England and the arrival of the children, after what is portrayed in the letters as a perfect idyll, in tones of exhilaration and high excitement—Hughes walked out for that storied creature, the "other woman," who is never the reason why. Sylvia, betrayed, is furious, demonic: the emotion is akin to that reserved for her father in the famous poem. But soon that too has spent itself, and the tone of the letters does not really change—it becomes more intense, more extreme, more strident, desperate, violent in the expression of its two modes, euphoria and despair. Earlier, she had told her mother: "I'll spend my life making you . . . proud of me." Now, as if sensing that time was running out, she was lashing herself against a deadline; writing in a literal fever, the fever which she records in another famous poem: "I am writing," she tells her mother, "with my old fever of 101° alternating with chills back." Chills and fever: her emotional and psychological as well as physical condition. Fire and ice.

Her collapse, degree by degree, following Hughes's desertion, is palpable in letter after letter, as the world presses in on her unbearably. Even her "beloved bees" attack her when she inadvertently upsets their sugar feeder; her dinner set cracks in half; the health inspector says the cottage is beyond salvation. She's running on sleeping pills and coffee; writing before the children wake up, under the whip of Hughes's growing reputation. If only she can get to London . . . From London, she writes, she is so "happy I can hardly speak," deliriously happy to be living in a house once occupied by Yeats, and she is writing the best poems of her life, the poems on which her reputation now rests. But of course there is no way of fending off the world; there's never a way. The winter of 1962-3 was dreadful, the worst in decades. The pipes froze, the tub filled with muck and slime, the flu was terrible, there was always trouble with the *au pair*, the children ran high fevers: nothing went right. In the last letter but one she ever wrote her mother, she's still dreaming of becoming a self-supporting writer; but, she

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says, "I need *time*." Weeks later she was dead.

What are we to make of her life? The melancholy truth is she can scarcely be said to have lived a "life" at all. For most of her thirty years she was the girl next door—the one who "wrote," who had talent and won prizes and went to a "good" college. She "dated" nice boys and had the usual affairs; and in due course married an Englishman, had the usual two children, and after years of strenuous struggle and self-flagellating work won some modest recognition as a writer. But something was "wrong" with her, badly wrong, though you'd never know it by just looking at her. Her "Prussian" father died when she was eight, and that went hard with her (though this is a treacherous lead for the amateur symptom sleuth); and her "relationship" to her mother was "ambivalent" in the standard way, a paradigm and caricature of the "sensitive," anguished adolescent and the "inadequate" parent. She would be remembered by some as bitchy, manipulative, a "user" of people; some classmates at Smith have never quite forgiven her for walking off with all the prizes—for having "everything"; and some remember the bounce, energy, drive, smile, ambition, cheeriness, zip—with revulsion, as if the girl hadn't since died. Some established writers who were her teachers (Lowell, Kazin, Robert Gorham Davis) remembered her dimly, if at all—another bright Smithie, with some talent. Countless other girls lived her life and then disappeared in the great void of American life, which would surely have been her fate had she not written, near the end, a thin sheaf of remarkable poems. That's what it appeared to be and that's what it was: little more can be made of the life. Her life does not lend itself to a "life."

Edward Butscher's hideously subtitled "critical biography" (*Sylvia Plath: Method and Madness*, Seabury $15.95) is bad biography—trivial, gossipy, injudicious, and sodden with the vulgarest sort of pop psychoanalysis riddled with its predictable palaver about the Oedipus complex and "Freud's pivotal father figure"; and worse criticism—for Butscher, *The Bell Jar* is a major work of literary art, for gnostic reasons which must remain forever impenetrable to all other critics. In short, he provides us with a depressing example of what can only be called classroom criticism, by which all works, "closely read" according to the exegetics and hermeneutics of the antiquated current academic orthodoxy, come out looking surprisingly alike, if not actually identical. A man who can write that the book accurately characterized by Sylvia Plath as "a mere apprentice work," "a pot boiler really," is "a solid, if flawed, minor masterpiece of sardonic satire and sincere protest, an authentic American novel about the disintegration of the American Dream, comparable to *Miss Lonelyhearts* and *The Great Gatsby*, particularly the former, in direction and theme"—the man who can write such dismaying rot can tell us nothing about the novel's author either, and can make no other claim on our attention. (What, in this context, is *in*sincere protest? and what might an *in*authentic novel about the etcetera be?) As criticism, this is scandalous, a travesty.

The most melancholy truth is that there should be no "life" of Sylvia Plath—none at all, not this one, and surely no "authorized" one, which could only be a dismal exercise in family self-justification, which would be both embarrassing and wholly unnecessary. No biography: the oeuvre is simply not of that magnitude by the most generous reckoning; and the life is not inherently interesting. We can construct a plausible fiction, all we need know, out of the published letters augmented by the unpublished letters, if they should ever be made available. Now we have a full-scale biography, and memoirs of those who knew her, and there will be further memoirs, and God help us other biographies; and the driving engine behind all that cannibalism, or necrophilia (as opposed to its ostensible justification: the final burst of vivid poems) is the suicide and the prurient fascination it exerts upon us.

JOHN NIXON, JR.

THE PLACE

Architecturally incredible
And a decorator's nightmare,
The place has blue ceilings
And is walled by trees
With birds—literal birds—in them.
It's been condemned for years.
It leaks, is torrid in summer.
Depending on solar heat,
It sometimes freezes people,
Winters, in the northern rooms.
The neighbors? Either dead
Or so distant they never call.

Nevertheless, a tenant,
Intrigued perhaps by the lunar lighting
Or a certain music ghosts exhale,
Will often spend seventy-eighty years
Being convinced the place is really
Unfit for habitation after all.

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THE THEOLOGY OF PLEASURING

DENNIS O'BRIEN

Binding With Briars: Sex and Sin in the Catholic Church

RICHARD GINDER

Prentice-Hall, $8.95

Philosophy & Sex

EDITED BY ROBERT BAKER & FREDERICK ELLISTON

Prometheus Books, $11.95

Sitting on the ground at Albany County Airport waiting for Allegheny to take off for Philadelphia, I was calmly reading through *Philosophy & Sex* at the behest of *Commonweal*. A pleasant grey haired lady filing down the aisle of the aircraft leaned over and said in a moderately loud tone, "You'll find more instruction in the Bible!" It's possible. As one philosopher has noted, modern philosophy seems more interested in indirect discourse than in intercourse and one would at least have to admit that the Bible shows some interest in sex even if its instruction is not always clear. Father Richard Ginder in his volume subtitled "Sex and Sin in the Catholic Church" takes it upon himself to discover a true Biblical view on sex. Had my fellow airline passenger read Father Ginder's account, she might have reconsidered her views about philosophy.

Ginder is a well known Catholic controversialist—a long time columnist of conservative leanings for *Our Sunday Visitor*—and I fear his former readers will be scandalized to discover he has turned sexual liberationist with, as he says, gay liberation in the forefront. Because I think Ginder's book is maddening in method, inaccurate in interpretation, philosophically impossible and tasteless, let me point out one continuously good thing about the book. Ginder is correct in condemning the capture of the sin field by sex to the detriment of a more diverse and pervasive moral conscience—at least this is true for traditional confessional box Catholicism. Catholic moral instruction has sometimes made it appear as if the whole labor of God's creation, the vastness of galaxies, the turmoil of ages, the tragedies of history were designed to ward off teen-age masturbation. This "traditional" Catholic engrossment of sexuality as *the* sin for man is perhaps reaping its just reward in the current pop secular view that sex is *the* salvation for man. Both views rather overrate the subject, in my judgment, and the dear lady on the plane was correct about the Bible in this respect; it seems much more interested in war and peace, slavery, poverty, property and loyalty than in lust.

Having given Ginder that credit, I can find little else commendable in the book. The method, if one can use so dignified a term, would have to be described as hodge-podge polemical. The text is a pastiche of bits and pieces from here and there with or without any relevance to the central argument of the book—if there is a central argument. Ginder wants to say that the Popes are not infallible on sexual matters so we get a grab bag of odd data about odd popes: Pope St. Celestin V was an 80-year-old recluse who reigned only fifteen weeks; Benedict XI was 14 on assuming the office and traded an archbishopric for marzipan. The idiocies of the Holy Office: "in 1635 Pedro Ginesta of Barcelona . . . was accused of having eaten bacon and onions on Friday." The book abounds in astounding facts: the average man produces 43 pints of semen in a lifetime; it is estimated (by Ned Rorem) that 75 percent of organists are homosexuals; I never knew that device was named after Colonel Condom of the British Grenadier Guards.

The general message of the book is clear enough under the debris of facts fascinating and dubious. It is general sexual liberationism. Ginder is more or less for anything that pleasures and does no harm. He thinks incest is imprudent; bestiality isn't as common as it once was, and fetishism turns some people on. Alex Comfort reports in *The Joy of Sex* the case of a man who could only climax in a tub of spaghetti. Ginder thinks it odd but would not object to this prurient interest in pasta. And what is the ground for this broad permissiveness? The mere inanities of past pontiffs can hardly be a ground for dismissing moral teachings. I think I can detect two arguments in Ginder's book. The first is biblical, the second based on "natural law."

The biblical argument is patently absurd. As usual with revisionists, it turns out that St. Paul is the source of all the bad later teaching. St. Paul was, says Ginder, "a negative thinker" who had "sex on the brain." All of the injunctions against sexual freedom are attributable to Paul which contrasts with Jesus' "cheerful philosophy of self-acceptance." What possible justification there could be for characterizing the preaching of Christ crucified as "a cheerful philosophy of self-acceptance" so totally eludes me that I will happily refrain from detailed criticism of the view. Biblical fantasy aside, Ginder's basic moral position is that sex is natural and what is natural is necessary and thus there is no moral problem with sex since one cannot command or commend the necessary. "We do not choose . . . to digest our food, to lengthen our hair or nails, to grow tall, to be either heterosexual or homosexual.

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. . ." Although he is not quite as explicit about all the other vagaries of human sexual taste, it appears to me that his general view is that various sexual behaviors are naturally determined and that it is simply perverse to thwart nature.

That argument is at least old-fashioned enough to be considered. It has been argued in some quarters that nature sets the norm and if the natural end of a process is determined, e.g., conception, then it is immoral to interfere artificially with the natural outcome. By parity of reasoning, if the natural outcome of my desire is homosexual, it is immoral to interfere artificially with same by exhortation, admonition and threats. Of course, the problem is that being homosexual is not at all like growing tall. Even if one admitted that homosexual preference was genetically determined (which case I do not believe is proved), *being* homosexual is a matter of chosen action. It seems very dubious to say that a person with homosexual genetic tendencies (if they exist) *is* a homosexual if he or she represses the tendency, choosing ascetic denial or grimly practicing heterosexuality. I suppose one can be latently homosexual but one cannot be latently tall or a closet digester.

In the case of sexual tendencies, it is obviously possible to choose against the tendencies and that creates a wholly different situation from what Ginder's argument suggests. One may argue that people *ought not* to choose against biological tendencies because of unhappy consequences or because nature is intrinsically blessed, but we are then

SEX, AGE, DEATH, PRIVACY

JOHN GARVEY

Remember the Louds? A couple of years ago we got to watch the Loud family fall apart right in front of us, on *An American Family*. The documentary made people wonder about privacy, and about the accuracy of such an explicit approach to such an intimate subject. It's a little like the problem in physics: observation introduces a new element into an experiment, and the very fact that it is being observed can change the results, or at least it can call them into question. At a less dramatic level the same problem can be seen at a lot of weddings, where the photographer stops the action at every vital point so that the bride and groom can have a photographic record of an event which was never allowed to happen, precisely because of the attempt to record it.

There has been a lot of talk about the erosion of privacy in our time, usually in connection with government wiretaps and data banks. But this is only part of the problem—the easy part, because it is obviously a case of us versus them. The deeper problem is the gradual disintegration of the belief that some things are too important for public inspection.

A number of books have appeared by now which illustrate the blurring of whatever borders once existed between the public and the private. The trend hits a new pitch of silliness in a book called *Show Me: A Picture Book of Sex for Children and Parents* (Will McBride and Helga Fleischhauer-Hardt, St. Martin, $12.95). *Show Me* brings a sappy open-mindedness to sex instruction, quite explicitly recommending an end to privacy: parents, the book says, should never close the bedroom door but instead ought to welcome the kids during lovemaking. Being alone together is equated with being stingy, and the possible appropriateness of privacy isn't worth serious consideration. Another recent book, *Yoga for New Parents* (Ferris Urbanowski with Balaram, Harper's Magazine Press, $6.95), is for the most part pleasant reading; but one photograph raised the question of privacy for me. A pregnant woman and her husband are photographed naked together in bed, and the caption reads, "Sex is a whole new trip. It's something else to be kicked from inside while you're making love."

Now whenever a person shows any hesitation over books about lovemaking the charge of puritanism comes up, and the person so charged falls all over himself to deny it. ("It isn't the nudity or sex I object to, it's the bad photography . . .") I won't bother to do that, but will point out instead that my disturbance here is precisely the one I feel about *Gramp* (Mark and Dan Jury, Grossman, $5.95), a haunting book which raises the question of privacy more intensely than any book I have seen. The two photographs on the back of the book are almost unbearably moving: one shows a vigorous man holding a child, the other shows that child, grown now, holding the man who once held him, now diapered and helpless. *Gramp* records the slow end of a man's life, his descent into death through years of senility. It forces us to confront the forbidden subjects of age and death, and nothing is left out of the tapes and photographs which record the last three years of Frank Tugend's life, a time during which he was defiant, incontinent and senile. Some of the book's final photographs were taken within minutes of his death.

Gramp is impressive. But someone had to make a decision to take all these pictures of a confused old man, of his diaper changes and his loneliness. As he lay dead on his bed someone had to decide, "Let's get the camera." Is being disturbed about this simple puritanism? A few years ago I saw a photograph of a father carrying his child's tiny coffin. His face was running with tears, and I wondered how someone could see in that

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into a realm of value choices. That biological tendencies are not automatically to be honored seems at least *prima facie* worth considering. Human beings have evolved out of some pretty nasty pasts; there is a good deal more blood lust and anger left in the genetic package than we should celebrate just because it is naturally given. It would be a salutary corrective for the modern social Freudians with their celebrations of sexuality as natural (and so to bed) to look over their shoulders at the Social Darwinites who argued that aggression was natural and thus war was the proper congress of mankind.

I think it is worth noting that Ginder's book is tasteless and chauvinistic. Commending premarital sex: "Never buy a horse until you've ridden her." He insists that concupiscence is "horniness." I quote my favorite of many unhappy turns of phrase: "It was the Jesuits who first fingered masturbation as a chink in the Church's barricade. . ." It may seem niggling to criticize taste but as we talk about sex, so shall we evaluate it. The volume *Philosophy & Sex* edited by Baker and Elliston is a collection of essays by diverse hands but a thread which runs through many of the articles is the view of Ludwig Wittgenstein that "a form of language is a form of life." In an article entitled "Pricks and Chicks: A plea for persons," Robert Baker points out much of the "gutsy" sexual language which someone like Ginder affects is demeaning to women. Women are animals (chicks, birds, fillys, bitches) or playthings (babes, dolls) or are reduced from whole to part (ass, piece).

tragedy "a good shot" and do the cold thing necessary to record it. There is a similar grisly presence of mind in the photographer who is able to capture a suicide in mid-leap.

But we have to question this discomfort. The vanishing of the idea that privacy is a nearly sacred thing has come about with the possibility of recording events directly on film or tape. Socrates disliked the use of writing, a new technology which could serve as a crutch and weaken the mind's power. There is a point to such a worry: in some nonliterate cultures there are still story-tellers who remember whole epics, line for line, and story-telling itself is a rich way of remembering and passing things on. Writing was a new technology which made some good things possible (including our knowledge of Socrates); but something good died with its introduction.

Maybe we are at a similar stage. It is certain that neo-Victorian attitudes won't help us. It would be a mistake, for example, to see *Show Me* as a kind of pornography. It is not the photographs in *Show Me* which are objectionable (they are frequently very good, in fact) but the insensitive attitude which the book recommends, its thoughtlessness. Is there anything which should *never* be shown? As soon as I try to imagine what might fall into that category I can think of exceptions. What about gore, or extreme agony? The photographer who takes gory pictures of accidents or murders for cheap tabloids is a world away from the photographer who took the picture few of us will forget, the picture of Vietnamese children running down a road in terror and pain as napalm burned out their backs. That picture woke many Americans up to the evil of that war by making abstractions about war impossible. That picture should have been taken. Similarly, a book like *Gramp* is good to have, precisely because of our way of avoiding the subjects of death and age.

Still, there are reasons for worry which are quite independent of the fact that we are not yet used to the technologies involved in the production of books like *Show Me* and *Gramp*. They have to do with privacy *at its depths*. To define privacy as an absence of snooping or prying, the right to draw a line beyond which others may not come without permission, is too limited. The deeper privacy has to do with the way we shape our world. Some activities and some relationships matter more than others. Choosing to make love in private is not necessarily a puritanical reticence. It is rather a sign of how important lovemaking is. Public exposure of everything has been advocated as a way of introducing loving intimacy into every relationship, but it ordinarily has the counter-productive effect of making every relationship as phony as an insurance salesman's solicitude. Where we are able to be truly private we have the space to experience, interpret and shape our lives in ways which public living and public obligations do not allow. Grief, sex, friendship, any sort of ordinarily intimate and private thing which becomes too public is also likely to become stylized. It has been pointed out that movies and television have formed the way we imagine things —we imagine crowd scenes, for example, seen from above, as the camera sees them and as we seldom do. I'm afraid that a lot of people have learned how to respond to emotional crises from soap operas, and I hate to think that lovemaking is something most people will learn from the movies. There may be an advantage to having a common way of seeing things, but at the same time our perceptions are narrowed, just as we won and lost something when writing was introduced.

I wonder too about the ease with which we can be fed images. It is as if writing were introduced at exactly the same moment as movable type. We are flooded with pictures of everything, and the people who control the floodgates are politicians and salesmen. There is also the problem of satiation: it seems to take more and more to move us at all. It is good to have a book like *Gramp*, and it was important to have that photograph of the burning children—but it is also a sign of our decadence that we needed either.

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The Ginder book and the collection of philosophic essays can be very roughly contrasted in terms of two dominant settings for sexuality. In Ginder's book sex is "natural" and the doings of nature become paradigmatic for the understanding of sex. While there is no single paradigm in the philosophers, there is a repeated resort to the notion that sex is more like a *language* than like natural process. Sexuality is a way in which communication occurs between persons; sex is even discussed as a "body language" in Robert Solomon's interesting dissection of perversion. Once sexual conduct is seen as communicative gesture, then it is important to see how we talk *about* sex since talk impinges on talk more obviously than talk alters nature. A shrug of the shoulders or a caress *with* words, "So?," "Nice!" is an enriched situation of communication. The enrichment runs in both directions, to see the role of "taste." A man who always calls a woman "a piece" subtly changes his perception of her from a whole human being to a part in a f—— function. What is equally interesting for the discussion of sexuality and human value is whether there are particular expressions of *body* language which enrich or degrade the meaning of sexual activity.

Thomas Nagel's widely discussed article on "Sexual Perversion" attempts to prove that perversion is a possible concept. (Something that Ginder would scarcely accept.) Basing his argument on Sartre, Nagel sketches a view of sexual interchange as reciprocal embodiment. My sexual arousal arouses the other, which in turn potentiates my sexual desire and so on. Perversion breaks the cycle of mutual embodiment. Sadism, then, aims at the embodiment of the other; but in a manner which leaves the sadist outside the cycle of desire, a manipulating agent not available in embodiment to the other. In terms of the dominant metaphor of communication or sex-as-language, the sadist, we could say, is one who only uses the language of *command*. (That is why military trappings are often part of the sadistic scene.) Language is seriously truncated if it is only a language of command and becomes radically unreciprocal (uncommunicative) when only one commands. The sadist does not merely use the words of command, however, he also uses body gestures of dominance. Without entering into the murky complexities of what is "natural" and what is "artificial" about words, it is interesting to ask whether "body language" is merely conventional or whether there is something "given" about the meaning of gestures. Can a slap be a gesture of love and acceptance? Do we simply learn that a kiss is a gesture of affection and in another country tickling the feet would communicate the same meaning? It seems doubtful that body language is wholly conventional. The mouth means too much to the human being for food, for talk, to be treated anything but gently. If it is to be made silent so that chatter may cease and consciousness can become body, better by the kiss of a lover than the gag of the sadist. The body is a map of human meanings.

If we accept the paradigm of the philosophers that sexual gesture is body language rather than Ginder's view that it is involuntary natural twitching, we at least begin to see how one could approach the relation between sex and human value. Not all language (words or body) is communicative and reciprocal; some language "says" things to other human beings that ought not to be said to human beings. I would suggest that what is needed is an extended phenomenology of sexual acts. Without for a minute wanting to return to the damnation preaching about masturbation that marked the all too recent past, it seems that masturbation cannot bear the same meaning as reciprocal sexuality. If a human being chooses to remain in the language possibilities of this gesture, is that like deciding the only proper form of speech is monologue? Of course there are times when we talk to ourselves, but that makes us like parasites—taking us away from others.

Take two forms of sexuality much in vogue these days, oral sexuality and homosexuality. Is there a "natural" meaning to these exercises in body language? Can "eating" someone's sexual organs express the same range of meaning as more conventional sexual positioning? And homosexuality. As far back as Plato's *Symposium*, homosexuality is questioned because it involves the choice of non-generative sexuality. One meaning that homosexual bodily communication cannot imply is generation of children and the projection of my historical person into a future I will never see. There is a closure in homosexual activity that heterosexual conduct cannot promise with such certainty. That may be its special attraction.

I do not imply that various "deviations" may not be intensely pleasurable and the exact moral measurement of these acts given the complex character of human interchange is difficult. I read somewhere recently that some sexologist has decided that masturbation gives the most intense sexual pleasure (I suppose because one doesn't have the anxiety of messing around with another). Even if that were the case, that would not settle the question of its value as gesture. One might decide to go for something less pleasurable because it carried a richer human meaning. On Ginder's view and that of most other sexual liberationists the distinction of pleasure and meaning is lost.

In sum, I commend the philosophers and think that even the Bible would be more help than Father Ginder in getting some decent view of sexuality. While I am convinced that Ginder's naturalistic view is totally wrong and that the philosopher's suggestions about "body language" are helpful, I strongly suspect that much more needs to be done before we are clearer on the place and character of sexuality in human life. The trouble with the body language notion is that at its best, body language is relatively unsubtle. One doubts that Casanova is to Sweeney as Shakespeare is to a jingle writer. Sexuality may be a language but if so, it is a rather rudimentary—albeit extremely powerful—one. How conversation in that language relates to our other conversations about science, the

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morning scandals, prayer, poetry, joking, lying and book reviewing should be worked out.

The Dead Father

DONALD BARTHELME

Farrar, Straus $7.95

IRVING MALIN

Donald Barthelme is a metaphysical writer. He assumes that we want to know answers to eternal questions.

In "On Angels," a piece which appears in *City Life*, he humanizes angels. He puts them into uncertain, "mid-life" positions: "They were overtaken suddenly by a fundamental question. One can attempt to imagine the moment. How did they *look* at the instant the question invaded them, flooding the angelic consciousness, taking hold with terrifying force? The question was 'What are angels?'" These sentences are worth close study; they reveal his artistic strategies.

The angels are overwhelmed suddenly; they lack preparation because they have been wrenched from stability. They are on edge. But Barthelme intrudes—more quietly than in other works—and indicates that he is also uncertain. He wonders about their "look." How can he picture their plight? There is a mirror effect. He, like the angels, finds that he must create new patterns, but he is terrified by such open possibility. (He is playful, of course, because he has *already created* the angelic predicament.) Thus artistic and metaphysical dimensions co-exist; it is hard to separate them. Although Barthelme tries to answer the question of angels, he ends his story-essay with the line: "He said they are continuing to search for a new principle."

Snow White, his previous novel, appeared in 1967. (It was written before "On Angels.") It is a curious work—a mixture of fiction, essay, myth, ritual, and parody—but it makes us think once more of metaphysical questions. Snow White is unsure of her position as woman. She recognizes, like the angels, that she is alone in an empty world which cannot offer easy answers. She is at midpoint; she cannot turn back to established forms and act like fairy-tale heroines; nor can she create appropriate conventions of behavior. She is terrified despite her coolness.

And Barthelme sees himself in her. He steps in and out of the work, offering sermons, spiritual headlines ("Anathematization of the world is not an adequate response to the world"), and odd asides. At one point he writes: "Trying to break out of this bag that we are in. What gave us the idea that there was something better? How does the concept 'something better,' arise? What does it look like, this *something better?*" (These questions remind us of angelic plight.) Barthelme wants to picture "something better" but he understands that his words—indeed, all words!—are not enough. They cannot clarify ultimate questions; they often pollute the world. He is in an impossible, suicidal condition—one of eternal sadness—and he ends without answers. The last words of *Snow White* are: "The heroes depart in search of a new principle/heigh-ho." These are written in capital letters; they are not punctuated; they "fly" from the page.

In his new novel, *The Dead Father*, Barthelme seems to offer more fixed positions. He begins with the journey of the father and his family across mysterious lands and final burial on the last page. There is continuity, but the fact that the "dead" father is half-alive—he speaks during the journey; he refuses to die—disturbs our sense of order. The distinctions between life and death—*this* world and *another*—are not clear. The father resembles Snow White and the angels; he also refuses to play proper, established roles.

Barthelme is darker here than in previous works. His father is the "source" of his condition, the creator, and he is not in complete control. He proclaims that he did not want fatherhood: "I never wanted it, it was thrust upon me." He rants. He pleads. He reverses himself: "All lines my lines. All figure and all ground mine, out of my head. All colors mine. You take my meaning." These various in-

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versions, subversions, perversions—I'm beginning to mirror Barthelme!—suggest that life is *unbalanced* and *unruly*.

Barthelme does not write a progressive work. He interrupts the journey to insert other plots, rulebooks on fatherhood, meaningless bits of dialogue (unflattering to women) and these in effect take control. They command his attention, suggesting that "stops" along the journey are more significant than the end. He apparently gives up the quest for final solutions. He prefers to rest and play it safe.

We may not like his strategy, but it is merely an underlining of previous positions. The interruptions are viewed as the main event or, better yet, as cancellations. There is no meaning except retraction and rebellion.

Barthelme should "logically" offer blank pages to affirm the meaninglessness of words, plots, fatherhood. But he cannot escape from his own condition. (He again resembles his heroes.) He writes; he creates; he designs pages. Why? The answers are not clear. Perhaps he understands that despite the sudden fall of fundamental questions (which cannot be answered *here and now*), he must not run away from his talent. He accepts his "burden"; he fathers new worlds of belief, action, faith—or anti-worlds of these—and achieves results.

The "end" of *The Dead Father* is curiously moving. We expect the journey to continue—there have been many false starts and conclusions—and when "bulldozers" the last word, buries the pleading father (who asks "one minute more"), we are unhappy. So is Barthelme. We share with him the illusion that the father is more than a "word," that he exists and dies. How odd! Although the entire book is so determinedly lifeless, it refuses to surrender to this condition.

Barthelme is aware of the irony. He is such an intelligent resourceful writer that he compels us to walk on the edge with him, to look down at "large gaps" of meaning, and yet possess impossible love for our strange condition. He is master of ceremonies, offering these to cleanse our hearts and minds.

Ultimately, Barthelme is deceptive. He usually masquerades as smooth writer, but he cares about age-old questions. It is time to reread him and to think of these lines from "Daumier," a piece in *Sadness*: "There are always openings, if you can find them, there is always something to do." He considers our spiritual condition; he opens new worlds. But we must continue on separate paths, wondering about the enigmatic interrelationships of art, spirit, and life.

Revolution in Cuba

HERBERT L. MATTHEWS

Scribners, $15

ROBERT K. LANDERS

One afternoon in January, 1959, as they strolled in the garden of a villa in the fishing port of Cojímar, Herbert Matthews suggested to the newly triumphant Fidel Castro "that the power he now held in his hands could do great harm, as well as great good, for Cuba." At this, Castro "stopped in his tracks with a startled look on his face, turned toward me and put his hands on my shoulders. 'But how could I do harm?' he asked in astonishment. 'We have the most wonderful plans for Cuba!' "

Those plans since have unfolded, of course, to reveal such wonderful features as political prisoners by the tens of thousands and forced-labor camps, but Matthews remains nevertheless enthralled by Castro's idealism. ". . . Fidel Castro and the men and women who during the past two decades fought and worked with him to make the Cuba Revolution," he writes now, "have responded to and acted upon idealistic motives. They have sought to make a better Cuba for the Cuban people and to achieve for Cuba a stronger, more dignified position in world affairs."

Matthews first met Castro in the Sierra Maestra in February, 1957, only a few months after Castro's calamitous (only a fraction of the force of 82 survived) "invasion" of Cuba from Mexico in a twin-engined yacht. *United Press* reported, and it was widely believed, that Castro had perished in the effort; and so, to dispel this debilitating belief, Castro sent out for a foreign journalist, who turned out to be Herbert Matthews of *The New York Times*.

Penetrating Fulgencio Batista's lines to get that historic interview (conducted in whispers in a thicket of woods) must have required considerable enterprise on the part of the then-57-year-old Matthews, but that cannot have been a requirement with which he was unfamiliar; as a war correspondent, he had been with the Italian army in the Abyssinian War, with the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, and in Italy and North Africa in World War II: his friend, Ernest Hemingway, in 1938, in a blurb for Matthews' book on the Abyssinian and Spanish wars, had called him "the straightest, and ablest and the bravest war correspondent writing today."

Nearly two decades after receiving that encomium, then, Matthews was in the mountains of Cuba, interviewing a dead man. In the resulting series of articles—which was later to lead *National Review* to quip that Castro got his job through *The New York Times*—Matthews revealed to the world that Castro—whom he described as the head of "a revolutionary movement that calls itself socialistic" and that was seeking "a new deal for Cuba, radical, democratic and therefore anti-Communist"—was "alive and fighting hard and successfully in the rugged, almost impenetrable fastnesses of the Sierra Maestra at the southern tip of the island."

Not content merely to correct the false report, Matthews created a legend, one which was perhaps even more false. Yet this should not have been too surprising; Matthews was, after all, essentially a war correspondent, and the manufacture of heroic myth happens to be the tropism of the war correspondent. Usually confined to one side of "the story," the war correspondent easily comes to feel more sympathy for his suffering subjects than obligation to his remote readers; and, as well, to regard war as the inescapable

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reality, justifying almost any brutality, so long as his subjects mean well, so long as they are, in a word, idealists.

And thus, as it seems to me, has Matthews all along comprehended Castro and his revolution. "My own approach to the Cuban leaders and their Revolution," he writes, "has always been influenced by my respect for their character and ideals. . . . The impulse behind true revolutionary action must be spiritual, which is to say moral and/or patriotic, not material and not simply an exercise of power." He now grasps that Castro "had no fixed or precise political ideas of any kind while he was in the Sierra," but whether the Cuban leaders appear to him as democrats or anti-democrats, Communists or anti-Communists, he preserves intact his respect for their "ideals." He does not, to his credit, entirely ignore ugly fact ("The worst that can be said of the revolutionary regime—at least as I see it—is that the practice of holding political offenders in prison and rehabilitation labor camps goes on, year after year."), but neither does he permit it to interfere with his "respect," with his belief "that Castro is himself groping for a form of government and society that respects human dignity and self-development."

If Matthews does not wholly ignore "the worst," it cannot be said that he approaches Castro's Cuba with excessive skepticism, or even consistency. In dismissing allegations of torture being in use in Cuba, he declares, "I am as certain as I can be of anything that Fidel Castro and his close associates would not authorize or knowingly stand for the use of physical torture." But earlier, in explaining "revolutionary justice," he remarks, "A revolution is a law unto itself; it makes its own laws, which is almost like saying that it is lawless. The revolution in effect says: 'Necessity knows no law; the revolution is necessary.' A lot of traditional legality, morality, and some hard-won fruits of civilization are brushed aside in the process."

Matthews judges that Castro's "radical social revolution" has been "an impressive accomplishment, and clearly an inspiring one to a majority of the Cuban people, especially the young." One wonders how Matthews can truly know, without benefit of free elections, how inspiring to the majority it is. Supposing that somehow he does know, and that the revolution is as he judges, one wonders why, in that case, Castro and his revolution cannot abide a free press or free elections. Matthews notes "how quickly popular moods can change," and points out that "When the Cubans had freedom of the press they abused it through venality and corruption; when they had elections they were, with few exceptions, fraudulent. . . ." But that hardly seems like much of an answer.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 355)

an expression for which I am unable lexicographically or by imagination to discern an orthodox meaning, Dr. Daniel C. Maguire more recently added four pages [Feb. 27] to the extensive criticism already received by the Vatican's new statement on sexual ethics. In the interests of that ecumenical cross-fertilization to which he appeals early in the article, may this Anglican and former professor at an Episcopal seminary proffer modestly the following observations.

In his petition to St. Thomas for support that "human actions are good or evil according to circumstances," Dr. Maguire conveniently fails to animadvert that the concern is not with what makes an action intrinsically good, but with what circumstances can render it evil: *Unde si aliquid desit quod requiratur ad debitas circumstantias, erit actio mala* (*Summa Theologica* I II, qu. 18, art. 3). Moreover, I invite Dr. Maguire to demonstrate a single example in which the Vatican's sexual ethic differs from that of St. Thomas.

Dr. Maguire made but half-hearted appeal to the Bible on the question of homosexuality, to be sure, but let us at least honor his appeal and send him there. When St. Paul, facing a complex of situations similar to those faced by the Vatican today, apodictically listed active homosexuals among those who cannot possess the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6, 10), he abstracted completely from any question of circumstance or "meaning." Neither in the Bible nor anywhere in the classical tradition of Catholicism can one find moral justification for homosexual activity, and Dr. Maguire knows this as well as I do.

(REV.) PATRICK HENRY REARDON

Collegeville, Ind.

To the Editors: Reading your featured Feb. 27 Maguire "satire," "The Vatican on Sex," I sensed at once the contentious tone condemning with faint praise; presently saw words like "universalizability" and "fundamentalistically" as apt echoes in an over-all hollowness. In progress I noted marginally several specious straw-men in Maguire's cantankerous ersatz of points the Vatican, he says, *should*

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have expounded. Then behold, under Item 5, he cavalierly makes the Vatican a habitué of that same singles' bar. Should one now say "Mirror, mirror on the wall" or "Monkey see, monkey do"?

The Vat. Dec. restates abstract, general, objective norms briefly, is not an Ethics Compendium; there is little call here for long treatise on the patent, never overlooked fact that circumstances do affect the morality of each human act, with cultural variations also having some bearing. In pastoral application norms, vision, and sympathy are indicated. But because M's approach is oblique, explication devious, and tone feisty, his content regrettably becomes rather frothy quoad his announced subject. Beneath objectivity he sees reprehensible harshness toward poor sinners; I find in his subjectivity some tolerance for that disavowed "licentious hedonism."

There is of course imposed no moratorium on discussion; witness this very philippic—itself a Ciceronean *praetermissio* more opposite than apposite. He quotes a Playboy Press publication to say that sexual liberation has not yet replaced the romantic-passionate concept of sex with a recreational one; yet earlier he himself has affirmed this to be an age "when sex has moved from taboo to calisthenics, from mystery to banality . . . stripped of all mystical and symbolic power."

Well, professors may continue to write on the complex subject pertinently and impertinently; it is nonetheless well that the Church betimes come forth with a definite list of "Nays" in the spectrum. Meanwhile some critics are too much like an angry cattleman with rusty pitchfork repelling *imagined* attack on his steer stall, itself only halfbuilt and on sand foundation, with a couple of disconnected stanchions, and as yet roofless.

(REV.) RUFUS H. ESSER, C.PP.S.

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Many thanks to Daniel C. Maguire, of my alma mater Marquette University, for his gentle job of answering back to the Vatican's Declaration on Sexual Ethics [Feb. 27]. In his quiet way he shows, I think, why I was right in guessing that the Declaration was written by a bunch of well-educated, articulate maniacs.

EDWIN KENNEBECK

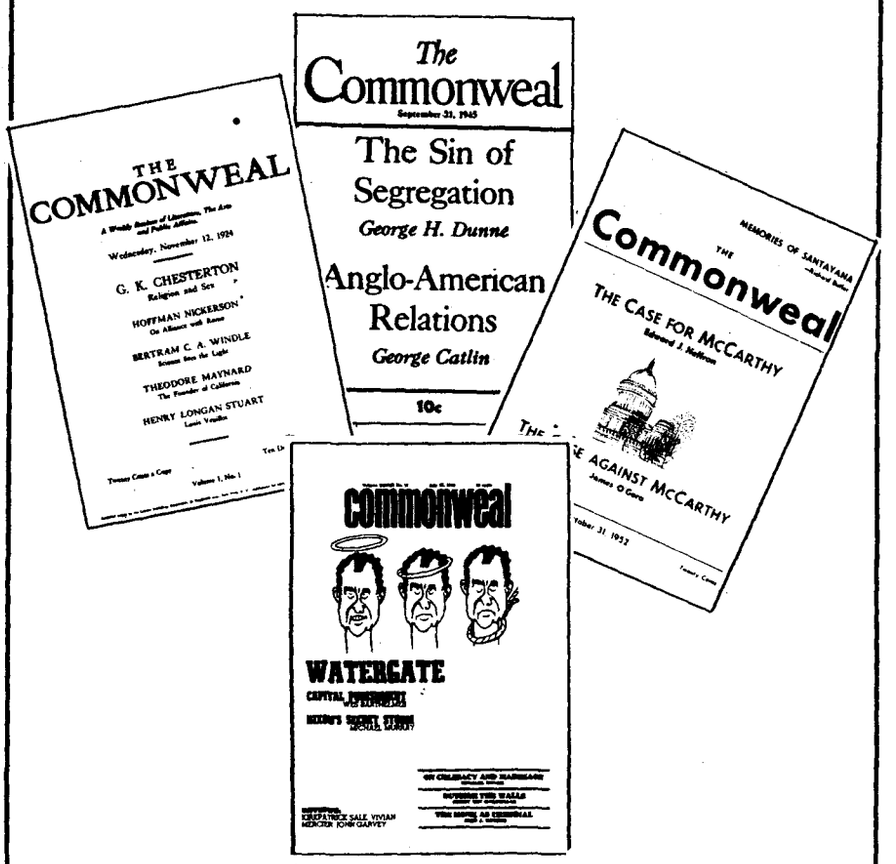
Reply

Milwaukee, Wisc.

To the Editors: Fr. Kilian McDonnell, OSB, wants to provide the actual context of Pope Paul's address to a group of theologians in Rome in October, 1966. Thus he hopes to show that the Pope said something other than I indicated. However, Fr. McDonnell, by merely adding a couple of sentences, does not provide the context of the Pope's remarks nor does he contradict my contention that the Pope says that theology is useful but not necessary for the hierarchical magisterium. The context of the papal remarks is what I cited in my

FIFTY-TWO YEARS.

A PROUD PAST . . . .



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article, the theologically undeveloped notion of the "assistance of the Holy Spirit." The further context is the recent papal conception of the nature of theology. [See M. Sechler, "Die Theologie Als Kirchliche Wissenschaft Nach Pius XII and Paul VI," *Tubinger Theologische Quartalschrift* 149 (1969), pp. 209-232.]

The Pope's point is clear: if push comes to shove, the magisterium could both teach and defend the faith without the help of theology. [AAS, 58 (1966) p. 893]. Without this help, the magisterium's task of teaching would be quite difficult (*magna cum difficultate*), but not impossible. Theology provides much that is convenient and useful (*magnum commodum utilitatemque*) for the magisterium. [Ibid., p. 892]. Without theology, it would be hard for the magisterium to fulfill its teaching role thoroughly (*cumulate*); it could, however, fulfill it. [Ibid., p. 893]. The magisterium could do this by "the charism of the assistance of the Holy Spirit," because it represents the person of Jesus the Teacher and is his quasi-instrument. [Ibid., pp. 893, 894, 896].

This papal position is, I submit, heavy with problems. Teaching and defending the faith is a theological enterprise. Even the New Testament writers were theologizing as they taught and defended the faith. One cannot theologize without theology. Both the magisterium of the hierarchy and the magisterium of the theologians are at their best unprofitable servants of the mysteries and the faith that they imperfectly explore. They are more unprofitable yet if they purport to be beyond the critique of theological hermeneutics . . . or if they do not know that they are doing theology when they are doing it.

The Pope's essential reliance is on the theology of the "assistance." Although this theology has never been adequately developed, it is used in Vatican documents as though it were in peaceful and nuanced possession. The *acta* of Vatican I show the contradictory understandings of "assistance" which appear unredeemed in Pope Paul's 1966 address. [See two of my studies which addressed the historical usage and assumptions relative to this category: "Moral Inquiry and Religious Assent" in *Contraception: Authority and Dissent,* ed. C. E. Curran (New York, 1969), and, "Moral Absolutes and the Magisterium," in *Absolutes in Moral Theology?,* ed. C. E. Curran (Wash., D.C., 1968).]

The Reverend Patrick Henry Reardon says that St. Thomas, in the *Summa Theologica* I II q. 18, a. 3, is not concerned with what makes an action "intrinsically good" (a term I would not find useful) "but with what circumstances can render it evil." A return to the *Summa* would show Fr. Reardon that the announced concern of the very article he cites is "Whether man's action is good or evil from its circumstances." Thomas' important conclusion is that "human actions are, according to their circumstances, good or evil." A careful study of all eleven articles of this question shows the significance of this often neglected and often abused part of the *Summa.*

As to Thomas' practical conclusions in sexual ethics, a devout Thomist is no more bound to them than he is to Thomas' conclusions regarding interest-taking on loans. It is Thomas' ethical theory that gives him perennial importance. There is, today, I believe, a discernible renaissance of interest in Thomas' ethical theory. If this renaissance reaches into what can be accurately called "Vatican theology," we will be spared future disappointments such as *Humanae Vitae* and the Declaration on Sexual Ethics. Of course, it is now, when the very banalization of sex is stimulating a hunger for humanizing wisdom, that the opportunity for service was missed.

DANIEL C. MAGUIRE

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REVIEWERS

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